THE ARGOSY.

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EDINA.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD, AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE."

CHAPTER XXII.

WORSE THAN PEAS AND HORSEHAIR.

AJOR RAYNOR sat in his favourite seat on the lawn at Eagles' Nest, at drowsy peace with himself and with the world. Of late, the Major had always been drowsy: morning, noon, and night, no matter what company he was in, he might be seen nodding with closed eyelids. Frank, as a medical man, did not like the signs. He spoke to his uncle of the necessity of arousing himself, of taking more exercise, of indulging somewhat less in the good luncheons and dinners. The Major made an effort to obey: for two days he actually walked about the lawn for twenty minutes, refused two rich entrées, took at each meal one glass less of wine. But the efforts ended there, and on the third day the Major gave reformation up as a bad job.

"It's of no use, Frank, my boy. You young folks can be upon the run all day if you choose, and live upon bread and cheese and table beer; but we old ones require ease: we can't be put about."

So the Major sat at ease this day as usual, lazily thinking, and dropping into a semi-doze. A letter had been received that morning from Edina, in answer to an invitation from Major and Mrs. Raynor to come and make her home with them now she was alone in the world. Edina declined it for the present. She was staying at Trennach parsonage with Mr. and Mrs. Pine: her plans were not decided upon; but the clergyman and his wife would not yet spare her. She had many affairs to settle at Trennach. Mr. Hatman had taken to the practice, as it was arranged he should do, and to the

house; but Edina could not leave the place at present. She hoped to pay Eagles' Nest a visit in the course of the summer.

Thinking of this, and subsiding into the semi-doze, sat the Major. The hum of the insects sounded in his ears, the scent of the rich flowering hawthorn was heavy in the air. Though not yet summer by the calendar, for May was reigning, the season was unusually premature, and the weather was, to all intents and purposes, that of summer. Bees were sipping at the honey blossoms, butterflies fluttered from flower to flower. All nature seemed to conduce to repose, and—the Major was soon fast asleep, and choking as though he were being strangled.

"You are wanted, if you please, sir."

The words aroused him. Opening his eyes, and sitting upright in his chair, he saw his butler by his side.

"What do you say, Lamb? Wanted? Who is it?"
"Sir Philip Stane, sir. He is in the drawing-room,"

The Major took a draught of his champagne cup, standing on the table by his side. Which cup, it must be confessed, was much more innocent than its name would imply. A quart or two of it would not hurt anybody: and the Major was always thirsty. Crossing the lawn, he went into the drawing-room. Sir Philip Stane, a little man with a white shirt-frill, a cold face, and a remarkably composed manner, rose at his entrance. Major Raynor shook hands with him in his hearty way, and they sat down together.

For some few minutes the conversation turned on general topics; but soon the Knight gave the Major to understand that he had come to speak upon a particular subject: the attachment of his son to Miss Raynor.

"It has for some time been observable that they are thinking of one another," remarked he.

"Well, yes, I suppose it has," said the Major. "We have noticed it here."

"William is getting on fairly well; he calculates that he will make at least seven hundred pounds this year. Quite enough, he thinks, to begin housekeeping upon, with help. With help, Major."

"I should have thought it just unbounded riches in my young

days," observed the Major.

"William considers that he would be justified in setting up a home, provided he can be met," continued Sir Philip in his deliberate, sententious way, presenting a very contrast to the Major's impulsive heartiness. "Young people do not of course expect to begin as they may hope to end: riches must come by degrees."

"Ouite right," said the Major.

"And therefore, with a view to the consideration of the matter—to finally deciding whether my son may be justified, or not, in settling

this year, I have come to ask you, Major Raynor, what portion you intend to bestow upon your daughter."

"Not any," replied the plain-speaking Major. "I have none to bestow."

Sir Philip looked at him blankly. He appeared not to understand. "My will is good, Sir Philip. I'd give a portion to Alice heartily if I had it to give. Thousands, I'm sure, the young people should be welcome to, if they needed it."

"Do you mean to say that you—that you will not bestow any portion whatever upon your daughter when she marries?" asked Sir Philip, in a tone of cold astonishment.

"I'm sorry that I can't do it," said the Major. "I wish I could."

"Then, I am afraid, I—cannot say what I had come to say," returned Sir Philip with the air of a man who deliberates aloud. "I could not advise my son to settle upon the few hundreds a year that make up his present income."

"Why, it's plenty," cried the candid Major. "You have just said yourself that young people cannot expect to begin as they will end. Your son's is a rising income: if he makes seven hundred this year, he may expect to make ten next, and double the seven the year after. It is ample to begin upon, Sir Philip."

"No," dissented Sir Philip. "Neither he nor I would consider it so. Something should be put by for a rainy day. This communication has completely taken me by surprise, Major Raynor. We took it for granted that your daughter would at least add her quota to the income: had it been but three or four hundred a year. Without money of her own, there could be no settlement on her, you see, my son's not being real property."

The Major was growing a little heated. He did not at all like the turn the conversation was taking, or Sir Philip's dictatorial tone.

"Well, you hear, Sir Philip, that Alice has nothing. Those who wish to take her must take her as she is—portionless—or not at all."

"Sir Philip Stane rose. "I am sorry then, Major, that I cannot ask what I was about to ask—for her. Your daughter——"

"You are not wanted to ask it, sir," hotly interrupted the Major.

"The fact of your daughter's being portionless debars it," quietly went on the Knight. "I am very sorry indeed to have troubled you, and subjected myself to pain. William must consider his pretensions at an end."

"They are at an end," fired the Major. "If it is money he has been thinking of all this while, he ought to be ashamed of himself for a calculating, mercenary young rascal. Were he to come to me, on his knees, after this, begging for my daughter, he should not have her. That's my answer, Sir Philip Stane, and you can take it away with you."

The Major's peal of the bell echoed through the house. But

Sir Philip Stane's hand was already on the door handle, letting himself out with a short "good morning."

Away went the Major, hunting for Alice. He found her with her mother. Hotly and explosively he gave an account of the interview: of what he called the mercenary conduct of Sir Philip and William Stane. Poor Alice turned hot and cold; flushed red and white by turns. She took up the indignity—as she was pleased to think it—quite as resentfully as the Major.

"I forbid you to have anything to do with him after this, Alice. I forbid you to see him more."

"You need not forbid me, papa," was the answer. "I should not think of it."

Major Raynor was one who could not keep in anything, good or bad, especially any grievance. He went about the house looking for Charles and Frank, that he might impart the news and so let off a little of his superfluous anger. But he could not find either of them.

Matters, during the past two or three weeks, had been going on as usual. Daisy was progressing so far towards recovery that she could sit at the open window of her chamber and revel in the balmy air, while feasting her eyes with the beauteous landscape. Charles was in a little extra trouble; for he had been written to twice upon the subject of the fifty pound bill that was over-due. And Frank, outwardly gay as the flowers of May, was inwardly on thorns and nettles.

That that mysterious personage, the Tiger, was wasting his days and his hours at Grassmere on Frank Raynor's account, Frank felt persuaded of. To him it seemed a fact indisputable. The man did not molest him; he did not appear to take particular notice of him; he had not yet accosted him: but Frank knew that all the while he was craftily watching his movements, to see that he did not escape. In fact, he knew that the Tiger was the spy of Blase Pellet.

The espionage was growing intolerable to Frank. And on this very day, just about the time that Sir Philip Stane was at Eagles' Nest, he flung prudence to the winds, and questioned the enemy. The Tiger had wandered as near to the house as he could go without being guilty of a positive trespass: and Frank, chancing to turn out of what was called the Beach walk, came upon him face to face. It was the first time they had thus closely met. For a full minute they gazed at each other. The Tiger stood his ground, and quietly took from his pocket a small note-case of brown morocco leather, with the initials "C. R." stamped upon it in gilt.

"Does this belong to you?" questioned the Tiger.

"Not to me," replied Frank. "But I believe it belongs to my cousin, Mr. Raynor."

"I picked it up a few minutes ago as I was strolling along. Perhaps you will be so good as give it to its owner."

Frank took the case from the Tiger, and thanked him. Even to this man, suspecting him, as he did, for a despicable spy, he could but be courteous. And indeed, but for the suspicion, Frank would have rather liked the man's face, now he saw it closely; the thought passed through his mind that, for a Tiger, he was a civilized one. There was a tone of pleasant freedom in the voice; the dark grey eyes, gazing steadily into Frank's, were earnest and steady.

"You come from Trennach," said Frank suddenly, speaking upon impulse.

"From Trennach?" repeated the stranger, vaguely, and evincing no surprise.

"Or from some one there," continued Frank. "Employed by him to—to look after his villainous interests here."

"I am my own employer, young man."

"What is your name, pray?"

"If I thought it concerned you to know it, I might perhaps inform you," was the answer, civilly delivered.

"But suppose it does concern me?"

"'Tis my opinion it does not."

"At any rate your business here does."

"Does it?"

"Will you deny that you have business here? Business of a private

"I cannot deny that; for it is true."

"And that your business consists in peeping, and watching, and spying?"

"You are partly right."

"And," continued Frank, growing warm, "don't you think that to

peep and to spy is a despicable proceeding?"

"In some cases it may undoubtedly be so regarded," was the calm, cool answer. "In other cases it is perfectly justifiable. When some end, for instance, has to be obtained: or, let us say, a problem worked out!"

"The Devil can quote Scripture, we are told, to serve his own purposes," muttered Frank to himself as he turned away: afraid of pursuing the subject; half afraid of what revelation the man might make, and of his fearless grey eyes and their steadfast gaze.

They strode apart from one another at right angles. The stranger with careless, easy steps, with profound composure; Frank less easy

than usual.

"I wonder," soliloquised he, "whether Pellet has let him into that unhappy night's secrets, or whether he has but given him general in structions to look after me, and has kept him in the dark? Any way, I wish Blase Pellet was ——"

The wish, whatever it might have been, was left unspoken. For the

Tiger had changed his course. Had turned to follow Frank at a fleet

pace, and now came up with him.

"Will you tell me, sir, what induced you to assume that I had come here from Trennach? And for what purpose I am 'spying?'—and upon whom?"

"There's no need to tell you," rejoined Frank. "You know too well already."

"Suppose I tell you I do not know?"

"I hope you don't: it's all the same," returned Frank indifferently,

believing he was being played with.

"Perhaps you have run up debts at Trennach, and are mistaking me for a sheriff's officer?" proceeded the Tiger, once more gazing steadfastly at Frank as he spoke. "Your cousin, the Major's son, has been taking me for one."

"How on earth did he get to know that?" thought Frank. And it seemed to be so confirmatory a proof of the Tiger's accomplishments in the prying line, that Frank felt as much exasperated as his sweet-tempered nature could allow him to feel.

"Your way lies that way, and mine this," spoke Frank, with a com-

manding wave of the hand. "Good morning."

The Tiger stood still, looking after his receding footsteps. A very peculiar expression sat on his face, not altogether complimentary to Frank.

"A curious lot, these Raynors," concluded he to himself, as he turned to pursue his own way.

It was perhaps rather remarkable that Charles Raynor should also on this same day be brought into speaking contact with the Tiger for the first time. Charley's troubles were culminating to a point: at least, inso-far as that he was about to be pressed for one of his debts, though he knew it not. It would come upon Charley something like a shock. Since fear, on the score of the Tiger, had subsided, he had enjoyed a complete immunity from personal annoyance; and this had lulled his apprehensions to rest; so that he went about here, there, and everywhere, feeling free as air.

He had been out in the dog-cart all the morning. Upon going indoors on his return, by the entrance that was nearest to the stables, he, in passing the butler's pantry, saw Lamb standing in it. The man made a sudden movement as though he would speak with him, and it arrested Charley.

"Do you want me, Lamb?" he asked, halting to put the question.

Lamb dropped his voice to a mysterious whisper, and Charley instinctively moved inside, and shut the door behind him. Lamb knew nearly as much about his young master's embarrassments as he himself knew.

"A party has been here this morning who wanted to see you, Mr.

Charles. When I said you were out—gone up to London, I thought—he seemed as if he'd hardly believe me. I began to think I shouldn't get rid of him."

"Who was it?" asked Charles.

"It was a respectable looking man, sir. Highly respectable, one might be tempted to call him, if his errand had not been to bother for money. Being near the neighbourhood, he had turned aside to Grassmere to see you, he said, and his business with you was particular. Of course I knew what it all meant, Mr. Charles, and I declared you were out for the day and couldn't be seen though he waited till night."

"I wonder which of them it was?" mused Charley. "Did he give

his name?"

"Yes, sir: Huddles. He ---"

"Oh, Huddles, is it," interrupted Charley, his mouth falling. "I'm glad I didn't see him. Is he gone for good, do you think, Lamb?"

"I should say so, sir. I fully impressed upon him that his waiting would be of no earthly use. I even said, Mr. Charles, that there was no answering for your return when you went to London, and that you might be there a week, for all I could say. I told him he had better write to you, Mr. Charles. 'Very well,' he said in answer, and went off with a rapid step: no doubt to catch the next train."

"That's all right then," said Charley, completely reassured. "Any

visitors been here, Lamb?"

"Sir Philip Stane called, sir. And some ladies are in the drawing-room now. Would you like some refreshment, Mr. Charles?"

"No, I'll wait till dinner time."

But it wanted some two or three hours to dinner time yet. Presently Charles went strolling out on foot, digesting the unpleasant item of news that his father had just hastened to impart to him—the sneaking behaviour (as he called it) of William Stane. Charles felt greatly vexed and annoyed at it for Alice's sake. He was sure there was a mutual attachment, and had believed that they understood each other.

Lost in reflections on this subject, and never giving as much as a thought to the matter imparted to him by Lamb, his eyes never raised, his footsteps wandering on almost as they would, Charley found himself passing along the common, on the side of the bettermost houses. Some words of salutation greeted him.

"Good afternoon, sir. A hot day again, is it not?"

They came from Miss Jetty, the carpenter's sister. She was sitting at work at her open window. Charles lifted his eyes to nod to her; and that enabled him to see some one who was approaching at a short distance. *Huddles*. Charley recognised him; and on the spur of the moment, he darted into the carpenter's to hide himself.

"I hope and trust he did not see me!"

But Mr. Huddles did see him. Mr. Huddles came up with a long stride, and was inside the house almost as soon as Charley was. Charley could not pretend to be blind then. He stood just within Esther Jetty's sitting-room; and the applicant stood in the passage facing him.

"I called at Eagles' Nest to-day, Mr. Charles Raynor, and could not see you. You know of course what it was I wanted?"

Charles was taken to. What with the unpleasantness of the surprise, what with the consciousness of the helpless state of his finances, and what with the proximity of Miss Esther Jetty's eyes and ears, raised in curiosity, he was turning frightfully cross. A few sharp, haughty words greeted Huddles, apparently causing him astonishment. This application concerned one of the two "bills" given by Charley; the one on which no proceedings had as yet been taken.

"Can you meet that bill, Mr. Charles Raynor?"

"No, I can't," replied Charles. "I wrote you word that I would meet it as soon as I could; that bill and the other also; and so I will. You must wait."

"For how long, Mr. Raynor? It is inconvenient to wait."

Charles flew into a passion. But for Esther Jetty's presence, he would have managed much better; that of course behoved him to carry matters with a high hand, and he showered some abuse on Mr. Huddles in haughty language, forgetful of diplomacy. Mr. Huddles, not at all the right sort of man to be dealt with in this manner, repaid him in his own coin. Had Charles met him civilly, he would have been civil; ay, and forbearing. The bills—he held them both—had only come into his hands in the course of business. He was really respectable, both as a man and a tradesman, not accustomed to be spoken to in such a fashion, and most certainly in this instance not deserving to be. His temper rose. A short, sharp storm of words ensued, and Mr. Huddles went out of the house in anger, leaving a promise behind him.

"I have been holding the two bills over for you, Mr. Charles Raynor, and staying proceedings out of consideration for you and at your request. And this is the gratitude I get! The affair is none of mine, as you know; and what I have done has been simply out of good nature, for I was sorry to see so young a man in danger of exposure, perhaps of a debtors' prison. I will not delay the proceedings another day. The bills shall pass out of my hands, and you must do the best you can for yourself."

While Charles stood, knitting his brow and looking very foolish, staring at the front door, which still vibrated with the bang Mr. Huddles gave it, and not half liking to turn round to face Esther Jetty, the parlour door in front of him on the other side the passage

opened, and the Tiger appeared at it. He must have been an earwitness to the whole. It did not tend to decrease Charley's annoyance: and, in truth, the sudden appearance of this man upon the scene revived all Charles's suspicions of him. The Tiger's face wore quite a benevolent aspect.

"Can I be of any use to you?" he asked. "I will be if I can. Step in here, Charles Raynor, and let us talk it over."

Charley lost his head. The words only added fuel to fire. Coming from this sneak of a sheriff's officer, or whatever other disreputable thing he might be, they sounded in his ears in the light of an insult—a bit of casuistry designed to entrap him. And he treated them accordingly.

"You be of use to me!" he scornfully retorted with all the scorn he could call up. "Mind your own business, man, if you can. Don't presume to interfere with mine."

And out of the house strode Charley, banging the door in his turn, and sending a good afternoon to Esther Jetty through the open window. The Tiger shrugged his shoulders with a contemptuous gesture: as much as to say that the young man was not worth a thought and he washed his hands of him and his concerns. Taking up his slouching hat, he put it well over his brows, stood for a few minutes at the outer door, and then passed through the little gate.

"Wouldn't you like your tea, sir?" called out Esther Jetty from the window. "I was just about to get it."

"Presently," replied the Tiger.

Meanwhile Charles Raynor was striding towards home, full of bitter repentance. All the folly of his recent conduct was presenting itself before him.

"I wish I had met the fellow differently!" he cried, alluding to Huddles. "There'll be no more staving-off now. A day or two, and they'll be down upon me. I think I was a fool! What a to-do there'll be at home! How on earth will the money be found?—and what will be the upshot?"

Indeed, it seemed that, with one thing and another, Eagles' nest was not altogether comfortable. Most of its inmates had some secret trouble to try them. And yet it was not twelve months since they had entered upon it, all glee and joy, believing their days there would be delightful as in a second Paradise!

The next afternoon but one, Saturday, brought William Stane. Alice chanced to be in the shrubbery, and met him. His countenance proved that he felt vexed, doubtful, ill at ease. Instead of the tender glance and smile that had been wont to greet Alice, he had a grave eye and knitted brow. The look angered her, even more than had the reported words of Sir Philip on the Thursday before.

What precisely passed between them perhaps neither could afterwards clearly recall. He said something about how sorry he was that their happy intercourse should have been marred; Alice interrupted him with a sharp and haughty word. William Stane retorted; and things were spoken between them, in the moment's anger, that could neither be unsaid nor qualified. Prejudiced by his father's account of the unsatisfactory interview with the Major, he had come, naturally inclined to espouse his father's side; Alice on her part upheld their own. Very short indeed was the scene, but it was a decisive one.

"I am sorry to have been so mistaken in you, Miss Raynor," he said, turning to depart. "No great harm has, however, been done."

"None," returned Alice. "Fare you well."

He raised his hat without speaking, and the echoes of his retreating

footsteps died away in the shrubbery.

Thus they parted. The fault being at least as much Alice's as his. Whether he had come to smooth matters, to repudiate the fiat Sir Philip had pronounced, Alice knew not, but she did not allow him the opportunity. If the possession of Eagles' Nest had taught nothing else to Major Raynor's children, it had certainly taught them self-arrogance. The world seemed made for them, and for them alone.

Alice went upstairs humming a gay song, and passed into Daisy's room. She halted at the glass, glancing at her pretty face, at the brightness of the blue eyes, at the unusual colour on her cheeks, and touching here and there her light brown hair. Frank's wife turned round.

"You are gay this afternoon, Alice."

"Gay as a fairy," replied Alice. "It is lovely out of doors. The

sun's shining and the birds are singing."

A few days went on. Charley was in a state of inward collapse. For, not one single minute in those days came and passed, but he was looking out for some dreadful shock, emanating from the enemy, Huddles. Each night, as the dusk fell, he felt not at all thankful that the blow had kept off, concluding that the morrow would bring it. Sometimes he wished he lived in the old days of barbarism and pilgrimages; that he might follow the fashion and set out to some distant holy shrine, with hard peas in his shoes and fretting horsehair next his skin. The peas and the horsehair would be pleasant, in comparison with this mental torment and suspense.

Alice continued gay; gay as a lark. Was it put on, this gaiety, or

was it real? Perhaps she herself did not know.

"You could not have cared much for William Stane, Alice, or he for you," one day remarked her mother, to whom the affair had given pain, interrupting Alice in the carolling of a song, sung to an impromptu dance.

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"Cared for him, mamma!" she returned in her spirit of bravado.
"I am well rid of him."

Mrs. Raynor sighed. Alice had so changed: not, she feared, for the better. So had Charles. Good fortune had ruined them all.

CHAPTER XXIII.

STARTLING TIDINGS.

THE first of June. A day destined to be an eventful one at Eagles' Nest. At five o'clock in the morning the house was aroused from its peaceful slumbers by a commotion. Mrs. Raynor's bell was ringing violently; Mrs. Raynor's voice was calling for help in loud and anxious tones. Major Raynor had been taken ill.

Frank was the first at the bed side. His uncle lay unconscious, or partly so, exhibiting alarming symptoms. An attack of some kind seemed imminent; Frank thought it would be apoplexy. Other advice was sent for.

Long before the usual hour for breakfast, breakfast had been taken, and the family hardly knew what to do with themselves. Dr. Selfe, a clever man, residing near, had seen Major Raynor—who now seemed to be somewhat better. The doctor quite agreed with Frank that the symptoms were indicative of apoplexy; but he thought that it might be staved off, at least for the present, by the aid of powerful remedies. These remedies had been applied, and the patient was decidedly improving. He did not speak much, but was quite conscious. On these occasions, when one out of the home circle is lying upstairs in sudden and most dangerous illness, the house is utterly unsettled. Habits and customs are changed; nobody knows what to be at.

"I shall have some more coffee," said Charles, ringing the bell.

"There's nothing else to do."

Lamb came in and received the order—some hot coffee. The breakfast things were still on the table. This was one of the pleasantest rooms in the house: small and cosy, with glass doors opening to the garden. It faced the west, so was free from the morning sun: but, beyond the shade cast by the house, that sun shone brightly on the smooth green grass, on the clustering flowers of many colours. The chairs, curtains, and carpet of the room were purple. Mrs. Raynor's little work-table stood in one nook, opposite to it was a low open bookcase. The chimney-piece was low and modern, its hearth was filled with ferns, its large glass reflected the room and its furniture. Frank, standing close, could see in it the breakfast table and its contents, with the stand of fresh flowers in the middle.

While waiting for the coffee, which had to be made, Charles leaned against the side of the window, half indoors, half out, whistling softly

and keeping a good look out around, lest any Philistine should approach him unawares. This illness of his father's complicated matters frightfully. In the midst of Charley's worst apprehensions there had lain, down deep in his heart, a vista of possible refuge. He had been wont to whisper to himself, "When things come to a crisis, my father will no doubt find a way to help me;" and the hope had been to his spirit as so much healing balm. But his father, lying in this state, could not be applied to: his repose of mind must not be disturbed: and if Charley fell into some tiger's clutches now, what on earth was he to do?

Whistling, softly and unconsciously, a dolorous tune, Charley indulged in these highly agreeable reflections. His mother had not come down stairs at all. Alice had gone up to Daisy: Kate and Mademoiselle were reading French under the distant walnut tree. Only Frank was there.

"I do think I can smell haymaking!" cried Charley suddenly.

"Yes," assented Frank. "Some fields are down."

"Is it not early for it?"

"We have had an early season."

No more was said. There flashed into Charley's mind a remembrance of the day he had first seen Eagles' Nest: when he had stood at one of the windows, though not this one, gazing out at the charming scenery, at the lovely flowers; inhaling their perfume, and that of the new-mown hay. Association of ideas is potent, and probably that scent of the hay had brought the day to his memory now. Barely a twelvemonth had passed since then: and yet—how anticipations had changed! He had believed then that perfect peace, ease, prosperity must inevitably attend them as the possessors of Eagles' Nest: he remembered picturing to himself the calamity it would have been had the beautiful place passed into others' hands. But he had lived to learn that care and worry could penetrate even there.

"There's the postman!" cried Charley. And glad, probably, of the interruption to his thoughts, he went out, and crossed the lawn to meet the man.

"Only one letter this morning," he exclaimed, coming back, with his eyes fixed on it. " I say, Frank, what is to be done? It is from old Street, and he has put 'immediate' on it."

"You had better open the letter yourself, I should say, Charles: my uncle cannot," said Frank decisively.

"I wonder what he has to write about: it is not often we hear from him. Nothing particular, I daresay: the good old father has not, I am sure, a secret in the world. Or—do you think," added Charley, his face lighting with eager hope, "that the money can have turned up? What a glorious thought! Yes, I will open it."

He broke the seal of the lawyer's letter. At that moment Lamb came in with the fresh coffee. Frank, still standing by the mantel-

piece, watched the man put it down; he stayed to set two or three things in order on the table before he went out again. As the door closed, Frank's glance chanced to stray to Charley's face.

What was the matter with it? The eager flush of hope had been succeeded by a look of dismay: nay, almost of horror. The letter seemed to be very short. Charley was reading it twice over, growing paler all the while.

"Can it be a hoax?" he cried, in a voice scarcely raised above a whisper, as he held the letter out. "It cannot be true."

Frank took the letter. There was no help for it. But a spasm seized on his own face, and a very terrible spasm seized upon his heart. When we are nourishing some great dread, any new and unexplained event seems to bear upon it. His fears had flown back to that dreadful night at Trennach.

But the letter proved not to be connected with that. The news it brought was of a nature perfectly open and tangible. Frank's own fears gave place to consternation and dismay as he read the lawyer's words: dismay for his uncle's sake.

"My dear sir.

"I have just heard a very painful rumour, and I think it my duty to communicate it to you. It is said that the will, under which you succeeded to Mrs. Atkinson's estate, proves to have been worthless; a fresh will having been discovered. By this later will, it is Mr. George Atkinson who inherits Eagles' Nest. My information is, I fear, authentic; but I do not yet know particulars.

"This is but a brief note to convey such tidings, but the evening post is on the point of going out, and I do not wish to lose it. I would have run down, instead of writing, but am not equal to it, having for the past week or two been confined to the house.

"Believe me, dear sir,

"Sincerely yours,

" Major Raynor.

"JOHN STREET."

They stood looking at one another, Charles and Frank, with questioning eyes and dismayed faces. Could it be true? No, surely it could not be. Street the lawyer, in spite of the boasted authenticity of his information, must have been misinformed.

So thought, so spoke Charles. "You see," cried he, "he speaks of it at first as but a rumour."

But Frank, in spite of his sanguine nature, regarded the information differently. He began looking at portions of the letter again, and did not answer.

"Can't you speak, Frank?"

"Charley, I fear it is true. Street would never have written this dismal news to your father while there was any doubt about it."

"But it has no right to be true; it ought not to be true," disputed Charley in his dreadful perplexity. "Who is George Atkinson that he should inherit Eagles' Nest? The fellow lives at the other end of the world. In Australia, or somewhere. Frank, it's not likely. It would be a frightful injustice; a cruel shame. It has been ours for twelve months; who will wrest it from us now?"

And truly, having enjoyed Eagles' Nest for all that while, regarding it as theirs, living at it in perfect security, it did appear to be a most improbable thing that it should now pass away from them; almost an impossibility.

"Charley, we must keep this letter to ourselves until we know more.

I am almost glad my uncle is ill; it would have shocked him so——"

"And how long will it be before we do know more?" broke in Charles, who was in a humour for finding fault with everybody, especially the lawyer. "Street ought to have come down, no matter at what inconvenience. A pretty state of suspense, this, to be placed in!"

"Drink your coffee, Charley."

"Coffee? Oh. I don't want it now."

The unfortunate news left Charles no inclination for coffee. Of all the calamities, falling or threatened, that had been making him so uneasy, this was the worst. The worst? The rest were but as light mishaps in the balance. Frank, with all his sunny-heartedness, could impart no comfort. The only possible ray of comfort to be discerned lay in the hope that the tidings would turn out not to be true. A hope which grew fainter with every minute's thought.

To remain in this suspense was nothing less than torture. It was hastily decided between them that Frank should go up to town, see Mr. Street, and learn more. He had no scruple in doing this: Major Raynor was decidedly better; in no immediate danger, as Frank believed: and Dr. Selfe was close at hand in case of need.

Frank lost no time; hastening to the station, and looking in on Dr. Selfe on his way, to explain that important business was calling him for a few hours to London. Mr. Street's residence was near Euston Square, and his offices were in the same house. The morning was well advanced when Frank got there and was shown into the lawyer's presence. He seemed to look less genial than of yore, as he sat sideways at a table covered with papers, his right foot on a rest: his hair was certainly more scanty; his light eyes, seen so clearly through his spectacles, were colder. Frank, who, as it chanced, had never seen him, thought what a hard little man he looked.

"Ah, yes; a sad affair," he remarked, as Frank in a few words introduced himself and his business. "Very embarrassing for the Major."

"But I should hope it cannot be true, Mr. Street?"

"That what cannot be true?—that there's a later will in existence?

Oh, that is true enough. And the Major has got an attack, you say? Misfortunes never come alone."

"May I ask how the fact—that there's a later will—has come to your knowledge?"

Mr. Street turned over a few of the papers on the table, and took up a letter from amidst them. "I had this note from my brother the banker 'yesterday afternoon," he said, running his eyes over it. "It tells me that a will, of later date than the one by which Major Raynor holds Eagles' Nest, has been produced, leaving the estate to Mr. George Atkinson. George Atkinson is on his homeward voyage now from Australia, to take possession of the property."

"What a mercy if the ship should go down with him!" thought Frank in his dismay, as the faint remnant of hope died out. "You—I presume you consider that this unpleasant report may be relied on then, Mr. Street?"

"Certainly it may. My brother is one of the most cautious men living; he would not have written in this decisive way"—touching the note with his finger—"had there existed any doubt. Most likely he has heard from George Atkinson himself. Atkinson is virtually his partner, you know, and head of the bank. I had thought my brother would, perhaps, call here last night, but he did not. Something or other has come to my ankle, and I can't get out."

"Then—this note from Mr. Edwin Street is all the information you as yet possess?"

"That's all. But I know it is to be relied on. I thought it better to write at once and acquaint the Major: he will have little time, as it is, to prepare for the change and see what can be done."

Frank rose. "I will go down and question Mr. Edwin Street," he said. "I suppose I am at liberty to do so?"

"Oh, quite at liberty," was the reply. "He no doubt wrote to me with the view that I should prepare your family, Mr. Raynor. You will find him at the bank."

The banker received Frank coldly; he seemed to be just the same hard, ungenial, self-contained kind of man that his brother was. Harder, in fact. This was indeed his general manner: but somehow Frank took up the idea that he had a dislike to the name of Raynor.

"I beg to refer you to Callard and Prestleigh, Mr. Atkinson's solicitors," spoke the banker to Frank, as soon as the latter entered on his business. "They will be able to afford you every necessary information."

"But won't you tell me how it has all come about?" cried Frank, his genial manner presenting a contrast to that of the banker. "If Mrs. Atkinson did make a later will, where has the will been all this while? Why should it turn up at a twelvemonth's end, and not at the time of her death?"

"The will, as I am informed, has been lying for some time in the hands of Callard and Prestleigh."

"Then why did Callard and Prestleigh not produce it at the proper time?" reiterated Frank.

"Callard and Prestleigh may themselves be able to inform you," was the short, stiff answer.

Apparently no satisfaction could be extracted from Mr. Edwin Street; and Frank betook himself to Callard and Prestleigh, who lived near the Temple. "From pillar to post, from post to pillar," thought he. "I ought to come at something presently."

Mr. Callard was a white-haired old gentleman; a little reserved in manner also; but nevertheless sufficiently cordial with Frank, and did not object to give him information. He took him for the son of Major Raynor; and though Frank twice set him right upon the point, the old man went back to his own impression, and persisted in thinking Frank to be the (late) heir to Eagles' Nest. It was a mistake of no consequence.

The reader may remember that when Mrs. Atkinson expressed her intention of making a fresh will in Mr. George Atkinson's favour and leaving Major Raynor's name out of it, she had summoned Street the lawyer to Eagles' Nest to draw it up. Street (as he subsequently informed the Major) had represented the injustice of this to Mrs. Atkinson, and prevailed upon her (as he supposed) to renounce her intention, and to let the old will stand. He went back to London in this belief, and nothing whatever occurred, then or subsequently, to shake it. However, after his departure from Eagles' Nest, it appeared that Mrs. Atkinson had sent for a local solicitor, and caused him to draw up a fresh will, in which she made George Atkinson her heir, and cut off the Major. This will she had kept by her until just before her death, when she sent it, sealed up, to Callard and Prestleigh, requesting them to put it amid Mr. George Atkinson's papers, and hold it at his disposal. There could be no doubt that she also, either at this same time or close upon her death, wrote to George Atkinson and informed him of what she had done: namely, made her will in his favour and placed the will with his solicitors.

"But, sir," exclaimed Frank to Mr. Callard, when he had listened to this explanation, "how was it that you did not bring the will forward at Mrs. Atkinson's death? Why did you suffer the other will to be proved and acted on, when you knew you held this one?"

"But we did not know it," replied the old man: "you have misunderstood me, my young friend. When Mrs. Atkinson sent the document to us she did not inform us what it was. I assure you we never suspected it was a will. It was sealed up in a parchment envelope, and there was no guide to indicate what the contents might be."

[&]quot;Then-how do you know it now?"

"Because we have received written instructions from Mr. George Atkinson to open the parchment, and prove the will."

"Is it opened?-Have you seen the will?" hastily asked Frank.

"Both seen it, and read it," replied the old man, stroking back his smooth white hair, and looking at Frank with concern. "It will be proved in a day or two. I sympathise with you and your father."

"Who are the executors?"

"George Atkinson and Street the banker. It is the latter who is acting."

"Mr. Atkinson is, I hear, on his way from Australia."

"Yes: by ship. We expect him to land in the course of a week or two. His written instructions were received by this last mail, and were conveyed to us through Edwin Street, to whom they were sent. Mr. Atkinson desires that all necessary preliminaries may be executed without delay, as he intends to take possession of Eagles' Nest on his arrival."

"He cannot know that my uncle is in it!"

"I daresay he does. He knew that Major Raynor succeeded to it, for we wrote him to that effect at the time. And he is in regular correspondence with his partner, Edwin Street."

"Then it is all true; the worst is true!" cried Frank, as the full import of what this meant for the poor Major and his family became more and more apparent. "I wonder that George Atkinson should accept the estate!—should wrest it from them! From what little I have heard of him—it has not been much—I drew the conclusion that he was a kind and a just man."

Mr. Solicitor Callard opened his eyes very widely. The words surprised him. "Kind! Just!" cried he. "Well, so he is: we know him well: but, my good young sir, a will is a will. You can't ignore a will as you might a spoken message."

"It will be a terrible shock to my uncle and his family. Utter ruin."

The old gentleman shook his head in pity. "Ay, it's sad, no doubt; very. We lawyers often have to inflict grievous blows: and we cannot help ourselves."

"One last question," said Frank, as he prepared to leave. "In the old will, Major Raynor was left residuary legutee, and therefore came in for all the accumulated money—though in point of fact the bulk of it has not yet been found. Who comes in for it now?"

"George Atkinson. My good young friend, George Atkinson comes in for everything. The one will may almost be called a counterpart of the other; in regard to the small legacies, and all else; save that George Atkinson's name is substituted for Major Raynor's."

"Is nothing left to the Major in this later one?"

" Nothing."

Frank Raynor went back to Eagles' Nest, carrying his deplorable VOL. XXII.

news with him. Careless and sanguine-natured though he was he could not shut his eyes to the dark future. It was not only the loss of the estate. That would have been bad enough, in all conscience: but there was also the money the Major had spent. The ready money that had been lying at Eagles' Nest and at her bankers at the time of Mrs. Atkinson's death: and also this past year's revenues from the estate. The Major had spent it all: and for this he was now accountable to George Atkinson; he could be legally called upon to refund it. A suspicious fear crossed Frank that he would be so called upon: a hard man, as he was now judging George Atkinson to be-perhaps without just cause-would most likely exact his full rights, no matter what misery and ruin devolved in consequence on others. In Frank Raynor's chivalrous good nature, he was thinking that George Atkinson, already a wealthy man, might have refused to take Eagles' Nest, and left the Major in peaceable possession of it. Perhaps very few men would agree with him; as the old lawyer said, a will was a will. This much was certain: that, no matter how large a sum the law might claim from Major Raynor, he had not a shilling to meet it with. Would they confiscate his annuity until it was paid—that five hundred a year: which was all he and his children would now have to fall back upon? "I wish with all my heart I had a good home for them, and a good practice to keep it up!" concluded Frank.

Poor Major Raynor! He was never to be subjected to this trouble, or to any other trouble in this world. It was past six when Frank got back to Eagles' Nest, and he found his uncle dying. The attack that was dreaded had seized on him about an hour before: just twelve hours after the first threatening in the morning; and there was little, if any, hope.

"Oh, my dear," gasped Mrs. Raynor in her pitiable distress, letting her head fall on Frank's shoulder, as her tears rained down, "it is so sudden! If he could but recover consciousness, and speak to us!"

"Aunt," he said, his own eyes misty, "don't you think we had better send for Edina? She would be a comfort to you."

"Edina!" was the sobbing answer. "My dear, she was telegraphed for this morning. Lamb went to the station just after you left. I know she would come off at once: she is on her way now. I could never bear up under this trouble without Edina."

"But she does not know of the worse trouble," thought Frank, looking on Mrs. Raynor with misty eyes. "It must be broken to her by Edina."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANK RAYNOR FOLLOWED.

The whole house was steeped in grief—for Major Raynor had died at dawn. As most houses are, when a near and beloved relative is removed: and the anguish is more keenly felt if the blow, as in this case, falls suddenly. Edina was a treasure now: she had travelled by night and was early at Eagles' Nest. Mourning with them sincerely, she at the same time strove to cheer. She whispered of a blessed meeting hereafter, where shall be no more parting; she would not let them sorrow without hope. Even Mrs. Raynor felt comforted: and the little children dried their ready tears, saying that their dear papa was with the angels in heaven, and they should go to him when God saw that they were good enough.

But of that other misfortune none of the household yet knew. Frank took an opportunity of revealing it to Edina. It nearly overwhelmed even her.

"Eagles' Nest not theirs!" she cried, in a dread whisper. "Eagles' Nest George Atkinson's!"

"And the worst of it is," returned Frank, running through a brief summary of the details he had heard, "that he means to exact his rights at once, and take immediate possession of the place as soon as he lands. Did you not know this George Atkinson once, Edina?"

"Yes—a little," she answered, a faint blush tingeing her cheek at the remembrance.

"Was he selfish and hard then?"

"I-cannot quite tell, Frank. He did not appear to me to be so."

"Perhaps not. He was young then: and men get harder as they get older. But now, Edina, what is to be done? They will have to turn out of this house, and where will they find another?"

The problem seemed to be as hard as was that gentleman, now on his homeward voyage: George Atkinson. Edina sat in an attitude of almost despair as she tried to solve it: her hands folded quietly on her black dress; her usually calm, good face perplexed; her steady eyes anxious. The unexpected blow had fallen on her sharply; and in these first moments it was a hard task to battle with it. Suddenly lifting her two hands, she laid them on the smooth brown hair on either side her temples—as if she felt a pain there. So far as she, or any one else, could see, the Raynors would not have a penny piece to fall back upon: no income of any kind, more or less. The Major's annuity had died with him.

"They are all so helpless!" she murmured.

"Of course they are," assented Frank. "Not that that makes it any worse or better."

"It makes it all the worse," said Edina. "Were they experienced and capable, they might do something or other to earn a living."

A whole world of surprise shone in the candid blue eyes of Frank Raynor. "Earn a living!" he exclaimed. "Who would earn it?"

"All of them who are old enough," said Edina. "Mrs. Raynor and Alice, to begin with."

"Surely you cannot think of such a thing for them, Edina!"

"But how else will they exist, Frank? Who will keep them? Charley will never be able to do it."

A blank pause. Frank, brought thus practically face to face with the position, was unable to answer.

"I wish to goodness I could keep them!" he exclaimed at length "I wish I had a practice and a house over my head! They should al come to it."

"It has surprised me very much indeed, Frank—to go from the other subject for a moment—that you have not sought to establish yourself all this time."

"I was waiting for some money to do it with, Edina. Poor Uncle Francis was constantly expecting those lost funds to turn up. It seems they would have belonged to George Atkinson if they had come to light: but we could not have known that."

"Your Uncle Hugh blamed you for it, Frank. 'Better for him to take a situation as an assistant, than to fritter away his days at Eagles' Nest,' he used often to say."

Frank made no reply. The mention of his Uncle Hugh brought vividly to his mind that last ominous letter of warning he had received from him. With his usual incaution he spoke on the moment's impulse.

"Is Blase Pellet at Trennach still?"

Not quite immediately did Edina answer. Raising his eyes, he met hers fixed on him. And he saw something in their depths that he did not like: an anxious, questioning, half-terrified expression.

"Edina knows about it," thought he. And he turned as cold as the frost in winter.

"Yes, Blase Pellet is there as usual," she replied, averting her eyes.
"And Mrs. Bell has left Trennach for good and is gone to live at Falmouth."

Why, the very answer; that last sentence, added gratuitously; would of itself have been enough to betray her cognisance. Else why should she mentally have connected the Bells with Blase Pellet? Frank quitted the topic abruptly.

Not until after the funeral-which took place, as was deemed expe-

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dient, on the fourth day from the death—were the tidings of their penniless state conveyed to Mrs. Raynor and the rest. How Charles had contrived to keep counsel he never knew. He was looked upon as the successor to Eagles' Nest. Servants and others came to him perpetually for directions—Is this to be done, sir; is the other to be done; treating him as the master.

Mrs. Raynor received the news with incredulity, astonishment contending with disbelief. Alice burst into tears; Alfred went into a passion. They talked foolishly at first, saying they would go to law: the newly-found will should be disputed; the property flung into Chancery. The only two, capable of bringing reason to bear upon the matter, were Frank and Edina: and they might have been as bad as the rest, had the tidings only just burst upon them. They pointed out how worse than futile any opposition would be. Not a shadow of doubt could exist that the second will was perfectly correct and legal, and that the whole of the property belonged to George Atkinson.

On the second day after Frank's return from London, while the poor Major lay dead in the house, Charles received an official letter from Street the lawyer. It gave in detail the particulars already known, as connected with the new will, and stated that Mr. George Atkinson was then on his voyage to Europe; with sundry other statements and hints. This letter Frank read aloud now.

"You see," he said, "even our own lawyer gives in. He says not a word about opposition. No, there's no help for it; Eagles' Nest must go from you. But I think old Aunt Atkinson ought to have been ashamed of herself."

"She must have been dreadfully wicked," sobbed Alice.

One thing they did not tell Mrs. Raynor—that she could be made responsible for the money received (and spent) during the past twelvementh. The claim was not yet made; would not be until Mr. George Atkinson's arrival; time enough to tell her then.

What their plans were to be, or where they could go, or how live, was the subject of many an anxious thought, as the days passed on. Edina suggested this and that; but poor Mrs. Raynor and Alice shrunk from all. As yet they could not realize what the turning-out of Eagles' Nest would be, and instinctively shunned the anticipation.

But upon none did the blow fall so bitterly as upon Charles. He was suddenly flung from his lofty position on the height of a pinnacle, to its base. A few days ago he was an independent gentleman, an undergraduate at Oxford, the heir to Eagles' Nest; now all these desirable accessories had melted away like icicles in the sunbeams. He must work for a living if he were to live; he must take his name off the college books, failing means to return to it; he must, for his mind's best peace, forget that there was such a place as Eagles' Nest.

Work for a living! How was he to do anything of the kind, he

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asked himself. And, even if he were willing, and the work presented itself, (some charming, rose-coloured vision of a sinecure post, would now and again present itself indistinctly to his imagination) how would he be free to fulfil it, with those wretched debts hanging at his heels?

One little matter did surprise Charles—he heard nothing of Huddles. He had fully expected that within a day or two of that worthy man's departure, certain sharks of the law, or—as he seemed to prefer to call them—tigers, would attack him. But nothing of the kind occurred. The days went on and on, and Charles was still not interfered with.

About a fortnight after the death of Major Raynor, a letter arrived from Mr. Street. And, by the way, talking of the Major's death, what a grievous farce his will sounded when it was read. Eagles' Nest was bequeathed to Charles, with liberty to Mrs. Raynor to reside in it for the next ten years; after that, if Charles should deem it expedient that she should leave with the younger children, he was charged to provide her with a home. The Major recommended that a portion of the lost money, when found, should be put out to interest, and allowed to accumulate for her benefit. Quite a large sum was willed away in small bequests. This much to one child, that to another; some to Edina, some to Frank-and so on. The horses and carriages, the linen, some plate, ornaments and trinkets, with sundry other personal things that had come to him with Eagles' Nest, were left to Mrs. Raynor. All this, when read, sounded like a painful farce, a practical joke. These things were all George Atkinson's; and, of the bequeathed money, the poor Major possessed not a shilling to bequeath.

Lawyer Street wrote to say that Mr. George Atkinson was come, and had held a business interview with them. Mr. Atkinson, he hinted, was not inclined to deal harshly with the Raynor family, but leniently. He gave them one month in which to vacate Eagles' Nest, when he should himself enter into possession of it; and with regard to the money spent in the past twelvemonth, which did in reality belong to him, and to the mesne profits, he made no claim. Let them go out of his house

quietly, and he should say nothing about arrears.

The conditions were, perhaps, as favourable as could be expected from a man of the world, cruelly hard though they sounded to the Raynors. They thought, taking all circumstances into consideration—his own wealth, which must be accumulating yearly, and his non-relationship to the former mistress of Eagles' Nest, and consequently non-claim in justice to inherit it—that Mr. Atkinson should have quietly resigned it to them, and left them in undisturbed possession of it. Frank, once hearing Charley say this, shook his head. He should have done this himself, he said, were he George Atkinson; but he feared the world, as a whole, would not; we did not live in Utopia.

And now came in the practical good sense of Edina. After allow-

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ing them a day to mourn and grieve, she begged them to listen to her ideas for the future. She had been thinking a great deal, but could only hit upon one plan that seemed at all feasible. It was, that Mrs. Raynor and Alice should establish a school. Alice, a well-educated girl, good musician, and otherwise accomplished, would be of valuable aid in teaching.

Three weeks ago, they would—Alice, at any rate—have turned from the proposition with indignation. But those three weeks had been working their natural effect; and neither Mrs. Raynor nor Alice spoke a dissenting syllable. They had begun to realize the bitter fact that they must work to live. The world lay before and around them: a cold, cruel, and indifferent world, as it now seemed to them; and they had not a shelter in it. To keep a ladies' school would be less objectionable than some things, and certainly preferable to starving. Setting up a shop, for instance, or taking to a boarding-house. It was Edina who thought of these unpleasant resources, and Alice did not thank her for it. Poor Alice had lessons to learn yet. It is true that Alice might go out as a governess, but that would not be keeping Mrs. Raynor and the young ones.

"I see only one objection to this school plan of yours, Edina," spoke poor Mrs. Raynor, who was the first to break the silence which had ensued, as Edina's voice ceased; while Alice sat with downcast eyes, wet eyelashes, and an aching heart. "And that is, that I do not know how it is to be accomplished. We have no money and no furniture. It would be easy enough to take a house in some favourable situation, as you suggest; but how is it to be furnished?"

Edina did not immediately answer. Perhaps the problem was rather too much for herself. She sat in thought; her steadfast eyes gazing out with a far-away look over the beautiful landscape, that they were so

soon to lose.

"Mr. Atkinson intimates that we are at liberty to remove any furniture, or other articles, we may have bought for Eagles' Nest, that he only wishes it left as it was left by Mrs. Atkinson," continued Mrs. Raynor: who, in these last few days of trouble seemed to have gone entirely back to the meek-spirited, humble-minded woman she used to be, with not a wish of her own, and thoroughly incapable. "But, Edina, the pieces of furniture would be too large, too grand for the kind of house we must have now, and therefore I am afraid useless. Besides, we shall have to sell these things with the carriages, and that, to pay outstanding debts here that must be paid: the servants' wages, our new mourning, and the like."

"True," replied Edina, somewhat absently.

"Perhaps we could hire some articles: chairs and tables, and forms for the girls to sit on, and beds?" suggested Mrs. Raynor. "Sometimes furniture is let with a house. Edina, are you listening?"

"Yes, I am listening; fartly at least; but I was deep in thought just then over ways and means," replied Edina, arousing herself to her usual mental activity: "A furnished house would never do; it would be too costly; and so, I fear, would be the hiring of furniture. Now and then, I believe, when a house is to be let, the furniture in it can be bought very cheaply."

"But if we have no money to buy it with, Edina?"

"Of course: there's the drawback. I should think the neighbourhood of London would be the best locality for a new school: the most likely one to produce scholars. Should not you, Mary?"

"Yes," assented Mrs. Raynor with a sigh. "But you know all about

these things so much better than I do, Edina."

The plans, and the capability of carrying them out, seemed to be, as yet, very indistinct; but at length Edina proposed to go to London and look about her, and see if she could find any suitable place. Mrs. Raynor, always thankful that others should act for her, eagerly acquiesced. Though, indeed, to get a house—or, rather, to get it full of furniture—appeared to be as a very castle-in-the-air. Chairs and tables will not drop from the skies: and Edina was setting her face most resolutely against running into debt.

"Now you understand," Edina said, the morning of her departure, calling Charles and Mrs. Raynor to her, "that I shall depend upon you to arrange matters here. If I am to find a house for you in London, I may have too much to do to return here, and you must manage without me. Set about what has to be done at once, Charles: get the superfluous furniture out of the house, for sale; and get your boxes packed, ready to come up. You must be out of Eagles' Nest as soon as you possibly can; on account of the heavy expenses still going on while you are in it. Mr. George Atkinson allowed a month: I should quit it in a tithe of the time. Besides that, Mary: you should be on the new spot to begin school before the midsummer holidays are over; it will give you a better chance of pupils."

They agreed to all: Charles rather dumpishly, Mrs. Raynor in simple confidence: anything suggested by Edina was sure to be for the best. It was impossible for Charles to rise up yet from the blow. With him, the aspect of things, instead of growing brighter, grew darker. Each morning, as it arose, was only more gloomy than the past one. A terrible wrong had been dealt out to him—whether by fate, or by that defunct unjust woman, his Aunt Ann, or by George Atkinson, he could not quite decide, perhaps by all three combined—and he felt at wrongs with the whole world. Edina had talked to him of plans for himself, but Charles did not hear her with any patience. Looking upon the present and the past to contrast them, drove him half mad. That he must do something, he knew quite well, and he intended to do it: but he did not know what that something was to

be; he could not see an opening for himself anywhere. Moreover, he also knew that he must make some arrangement with the people at Oxford to whom he owed money.

Another thing had to be done—the taking his name off the college books. Charles went down to do this; and to confer with his creditors. Very young men are often most sensitive on the score of debt: Charles Raynor was so: and it seemed to him a formidable and distressing task to meet these men, avow his poverty, and beg of them to be lenient and wait.

"I declare I'd rather meet his Satanic majesty, and hold a battle with him!" cried Charley as he started forth to the encounter.

But he found the creditors most considerate. They had heard of his reverse of fortune. The news of the fresh will put forward, and the consequent transfer of Eagles' Nest from the Raynors to George Atkinson the banker, had been made much of in the newspapers. One and all met Charles pleasantly; some actuated by genuine pity for the young man, others by the remembrance that you can't get blood from a stone. Half the sting was taken from Charley's task. He told them truly that he had no present means whatever, therefore could not offer to pay: but he assured them—and his voice was earnest, and they saw he meant it—that he would pay them whenever it should be in his power to do so, though that might not be for years to come. So he and they parted cordially. After all, no one individual debt was very much, though in the aggregate the sums looked formidable.

Mr. Huddles was left till last. Charles dreaded him most. The debt there was the largest. The two bills were for fifty pounds each, making one hundred; and the mischief alone knew what the added expenses would be. Not only did Charles dread him because he would have to eat humble pie, which he hated and detested, and beg the man to hold the bills on, but he believed that Mr. Huddles could clap hands upon him without ceremony. Nevertheless he had no choice but to enter on the interview: for he must know his own position before he could plan out or venture on any career of life. He went forth to it at dusk; some dim idea persuading him that tigers and kidnappers might not exercise their functions after sunset.

Mr. Huddles sat alone in his parlour when Charles was shown in: a well-lighted and well-furnished room. Instead of the scowl and the frown Charles had anticipated, he rose with a smile and a pleasant look, and offered a chair to Charles.

"We were both a little out of temper the other day, Mr. Raynor," said he; "and both, I daresay, felt sorry for it afterwards. What can I do for you?"

To hear this, completely took Charles aback. Down he sat, with some indistinct words of answer. And then, getting up what courage he could, he entered upon the subject of the bills.

"I have come here to-night to beg of you to be so kind as hold them over. The expenses, I suppose ——"

"I don't understand you, sir," interrupted Mr. Huddles. "What

bills are you talking of?"

"The two bills for fifty pounds each—I have no others. Although I know how unjust it must seem to ask you to do this, Mr. Huddles, as you are only a third party and had nothing whatever to do with the transaction, I have no other resource but to throw myself upon your good feeling. I am quite unable to take the bills up; you have probably heard of our reverse of fortune; but I will give you my word of honour to do so as soon as—"

"The bills are paid," cried Mr. Huddles, not allowing him to go on.

"Paid!" echoed Charley.

"Paid; both of them. Why-did you not know it?"

"No, that I did not. Who has paid them?"

"Some legal firm in London. The name—let me see—Symmonds, I think. Yes, that was it: Symmonds and Son, solicitors."

Charley could only stare. He began to think Mr. Huddles was playing a joke upon him; perhaps to turn round on him afterwards.

"I don't know any people of the name of Symmonds, or they me," said he. "How came they to pay?"

"I think Major Raynor—I was sorry to see his death in the Times so soon afterwards—gave them the necessary orders."

Charles shook his head; it was not at all likely, as he knew. He lost himself in a maze of thought.

"The evening I saw you, I was running into the station to catch a train, having lingered rather too long at the inn over some late refreshment," explained Mr. Huddles, perceiving that Charles was altogether puzzled, "when a gentleman accosted me, asking if my errand at the place had not been connected with Major Raynor's son. I replied that it had. This gentleman then said that if I would furnish the particulars of the debt to Messrs. Symmonds and Son, solicitors, of London, they would no doubt see that I was paid; and he handed me their address. I sent the particulars up the next day, and in the course of a post or two received the money."

"It must have been Frank," thought Charles, the idea flashing into his mind. "What was this gentleman like, Mr. Huddles?"

"Upon my word, sir, I can hardly tell you," was the reply. "The train dashed in just as he began to speak to me; several passengers were waiting for it, and there was a good bit of confusion. It was dusk also. Nearly dark, in fact."

"A good-looking, pleasant-speaking fellow?"

"Yes, I think so. He had a pleasant voice."
"Nobody but Frank," decided Charles. "It's just like him to do

these good-natured things. I wonder how he found the money? And why in the world did he not tell me he had done it?"

So this great trouble was at an end; and Charles might for the present be pronounced free from worry on the score of debt. If the Fates had been bitterly hard to him latterly, it seemed that they yet held some little kindness in store for him.

But this visit to the University city was productive of the most intense chagrin in other ways to Charles Raynor, of the keenest humiliation. "But a short while ago, I was one of them, with the world all before me that I could hold my head up in!" he kept telling himself, as he watched the undergraduates passing in the street, then keeping their Trinity term, he holding himself aloof from them, for he had not the courage to show his face. If by unavoidable chance he encountered one or two, he got away as quickly as he could, after exchanging a few uncomfortable sentences. While they, knowing of his change of circumstances, of the blighting of his prospects, made no effort to detain him; and if their manner displayed a certain restraint, springing from innate pity, from delicacy of feeling, Charles put it down to a very different cause, and felt all the deeper mortification.

As he quitted Oxford by an early morning train on his way home, his thoughts were busy with what had passed. For one thing, he found that his days of torment at Eagles' Nest, when he went about in fear of writs and arrest-or, rather, dared not go about-had been without foundation. With the exception of Mr. Huddles-and that was much later-not a single creditor had followed him there: neither had any written to him, save the one whose letter had by misadventure fallen into the hands of Major Raynor. Who then was the Tiger, Charles asked himself. Could it be that, after all, that fiercely-named man had positively held no mission that concerned him? It might be so: and that Charles had dreaded and hated him for nothing. The Tiger had left Grassmere now: as Charles happened to know. Tetty said so the other day when he was at Eagles' Nest. To come back again sometime Jetty believed, for the gentleman had said as much to his sister Esther when leaving: he liked the lodgings and liked the place, and should no doubt be visiting them again.

And so, Charles Raynor returned home, relieved on the whole, in spite of his never-lifted trouble, and with a lively feeling of gratitude to Frank Raynor in his heart.

He could not yet personally thank Frank; for Frank and his wife had quitted Eagles' Nest soon after the funeral of Major Raynor. With the fortunes of its hitherto supposed owners come to an end, Frank could not any longer remain, a weight on their hospitable hands. It was at length necessary that he should bestir himself in earnest, and see in what manner he could make a living for himself and Daisy. One great impediment to his doing this comfortably was, that he had no money.

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Save a few spare pounds in his pocket for present passing exigencies, he had positively none. Daisy was not very strong yet, and could not be put about. She was going to stay with her sister, Captain Townley's wife, for two or three weeks, who had just come over from India with her children, and had taken a furnished house in London. Daisy wrote to her from Eagles' Nest, proffering the visit: she saw what a convenience it would be to Frank to be "rid" of her, as she laughingly said, while he was looking about for some place that they could settle in Mrs. Townley's answer had been speedy and cordial. "Yes, you can come here, Daisy; I shall be delighted to see you. But what a silly child you must have been to make the undesirable runaway marriage they tell me of! I thought all the St. Clares had better sense than that."

But the Tiger is not done with yet. On the day that Frank and his wife said farewell to Eagles' Nest, and took the train for London, Frank jumped out of the carriage at an intermediate station, to get a newspaper. On his way to jump into it again, he had his eyes on the newspaper, and chanced to go up to the wrong compartment, the one behind his own. Swinging open the door, Frank saw there was no room for him, and at the same moment found his face in pretty close contact with another face: one adorned with a silky brown beard and the steadfast grey eyes Frank had learned to know.

"This compartment is full, sir."

How far back Frank recoiled at the words, at the sight, he never knew. It was the Tiger. With a sinking of the heart, a rush of dismay, he made his way into his own carriage; and let the newspaper, that he had been eager for, drop uncared for between his knees.

"He is following me to town," cried Frank mentally, in his deep conviction. "He means to track me. How shall I escape him?"

(To be continued.)

PRINCESS ELEANOR.

XVIII.

DEAR GEOFFREY,—Whether new torments are in store for me, or whether I am reserved for better times, I know not—from the fact that I can write to you, you conclude that I have escaped death. A slight wound in my left shoulder is the only consequence of my encounter.

I had asked two young friends of mine to be my seconds. I told them as little as possible of the affair, the gravity of which they could not understand. They begged me to recollect that Werdan was one of the best shots in the country before he retired from the army. It was, therefore, to my interest to send him the sharpest challenge possible; a thing I should have done in any case, however. Our meeting was arranged to take place in the Park at eight o'clock the next morning.

I slept a few hours, but spent the greater part of the night in looking over my papers, making my will, and writing to Eleanor. I sealed all, and entrusted the documents to my seconds.

The feelings and sensations common to persons in my position were totally unknown to me. My life had lost all charm. Nothing remained but the wish to punish the villain who, with unprincipled heedlessness, had trifled with the life and honour of his fellow man.

We were the first to reach the spot with our doctor; but a few minutes later my opponent arrived with his seconds and another doctor.

The conditions were read aloud and signed by both adversaries and by the seconds. The pistols were now loaded, and the distance measured and marked.

We were to aim whilst the seconds counted six.

The usual attempt at reconciliation was made; but, as Werdan refused to give me back my word, it was of course unsuccessful.

The seconds gave us our pistols, the mouths of which were soon opposed to each other.

My adversary's second began to count.

At "Four!" both shots had gone off together. Neither of us wavered in the least. My second asked me if I felt pain, and I answered in the negative.

We took up the second pistols, and the counting again began. This time the shots were heard at "Five!" Werdan staggered, and in a

few moments fell heavily to the ground. His friends and the doctors hurried to assist him, whilst my seconds began to examine me. I felt an acute pain in my left shoulder, and the warm blood streaming out. The doctors bound up our wounds. Mine is but a slight hurt, and will scarcely require a few weeks to heal. Werdan's wounds are more serious.

What will become of me, friend? My life's best hopes are destroyed! Perhaps you are after all destined to be my only consolation.

As soon as my wound permits of my leaving this room, I start for Italy.

For ever yours,

WALTER.

XIX

Amy,—From a long, profound sleep I have awakened with a cry of horror! My dream, with its joys and its pangs, has faded with the returning light, and in its place has come a reality, whose brightest side even fills me with dismay.

A vile act of fraud has been committed in our house. In the place of Rembrandt's master-work hangs a copy, exchanged by some guilty hand.

I was present when the fraud was detected; saw with my own eyes how Walter Impach turned pale at sight of the copy; heard with my own ears how he confessed it to be his work. I saw him look around the room for one face which promised support. I, too, for a moment believed that this man had outraged friendship and hospitality; had betrayed all that is most sacred on earth; had stained his hand with crime.

On my begging him to do so, Ernest ended the painful scene. My eyes followed the retiring figure of the artist. On the threshold he turned round, and gave me one look. Amy, his life, his soul, lay in that look. It was the cry of one unjustly condemned, whose noble heart made no other protestation but that single look. It had a magical effect upon me. I felt that heaven and earth might now combine to prove him guilty; that all humanity might fill my ear with the most manifest evidence. I would have defied them all, and believed that look. It had not only made me forever his stanchest advocate—no, I myself was Walter Impach! Why do I use so many words to tell you what I felt, when in three syllables I can say it better than in volumes? I love him!

But not borne into the air by angel voices do those happy words sound for me. As the first peal of thunder of a coming storm they fall upon my heart.

I fell as one dead to the ground. When I awoke from my fainting fit, Ernest was sitting by my side, his head bent low, both his hands clasped on mine.

"Poor little flower," he said, "over whom the frost of the earth has spread so soon! Could I but have spared you that scene! You will distrust men of his sort all your life now."

Amy, dear, you would, like myself, have distrusted Ernest for the first time. I went to work very slowly, however, wishing to impress him by degrees.

"Have you no doubt whatever as to the artist's guilt? His love for old pictures is great, I know, but he could not conceal such a master-piece as that! Of what use is it to him, if he can never look at it?"

"My innocent little dove! It is not a question of love of art. That man is the agent of some villain, and he has committed this act for money. He is poor, and may have been tempted by some large sum."

"Old Baron Gerhardt?" I timidly suggested.

"My child, I must not hear you utter such things. Your mind goes astray in this labyrinth of wickedness. A true nobleman is not capable of anything so mean!"

"What will you do?" I asked in my anxiety.

"Leave him a short time to repent. If the picture alone were in question, I should give it up, and let things rest as they are. But to permit a villain such as this to go about the land unmarked would be contrary to my sense of justice. Try and forget the whole episode, my love. I will do the same until I am forced to think of it again."

He kissed me on the forehead and went away.

He was scarcely gone when I sprang up. With the contending feelings that filled my heart I could not lie still.

"Forget the whole episode, Ernest! 'Twould be ceasing to exist!"
I lived over again the last few months of my life; the long time I had been together with the man I have trifled with. Yes, Amy, I have trifled with him, for how could I be blind to the thousand evidences of his love? I received them daily, hourly, and took them as something natural. How shall I exist now? how bear life without him?

In the dreadful discovery I have made, I see naught but a just punishment for the arrogance peculiar to our rank, which deems it more likely that one of its daughters should fall in love with her lapdog than with a youth belonging to any class below it. But why should I atone for the sins of a whole caste? Why must I see him outraged, mocked, degraded, at the very moment when I feel that I love him with my whole heart? And I have no power to do anything! Tell Ernest of his last protesting glance? Such things cannot be described; they can only be felt. And everything speaks against him. Why did he copy the picture in secret? Why did he turn pale when the question was put to him? Why does he not come forward now, and clear himself to me?

Amy, I am half out of my senses as I write this. Surely he has

good reason for behaving thus, and I am wrong not to trust him, as a woman must trust the man she loves.

. . . . I have been interrupted in my letter. Prince Arsent was waiting in the drawing-room, and Ernest being out, and Cousin Dorothy's nerves still too much shattered by "that shameless hypocrite's behaviour," I could not refuse to receive him.

I scarcely forced a smile upon my lips, and got no further after the first greeting was over. Arsent took all the trouble upon himself, and never ceased talking. I caught a word here and there, and guessed that he must be telling me how lonely his father was in the solitude of his castle; how he had called him back, to brighten the last days of his life. When Arsent had reached so far, he rose, walked up to me, and as I looked up to him in surprise, he said:

"You are so equally amiable to all that it has been quite impossible to detect the slightest preference for any one of your admirers. It is for this reason that I hope nothing, and yet all. That the light of your eyes is my sunshine, you must have known all along. May I ask if my father is to receive the glorious news that Princess Eleanor of Waldemberg will one day grace our old castle as its mistress?"

It was too much, Amy, at that moment. Yet perhaps it was better so, for I could give him my answer more bravely than I could have done at any other time.

As I was framing my refusal as delicately as I could, Ernest came into the room. I tried to escape, but a look from my brother compelled me to remain.

Arsent stood speechless and embarrassed for some time, and then turned the subject.

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you," he exclaimed, "that early this morning I met your artist, Herr Impach, in a carriage. He had three gentlemen with him, in one of whom I recognised Dr. Jung. But what surprised me most was that at a short distance followed Werdan's brougham, with its owner and three other gentlemen in it. Could they be going to fight? And if so, what on earth should those two be fighting for? Besides, Werdan would have asked me to be his second."

Ernest became pensive, and Arsent, feeling doubtless the moment inopportune for pleading his suit, took his leave.

A duel, Amy! Tell me, was my cup not full to overflowing, that this sorrow must be added to the others?

I have sent an excuse for not appearing at the dinner-table, as it requires solitude to enable me to come to a resolution in my perplexing position.

If I think of Impach as I now know him, I start up, and in, the rapture of calling him my own, should like to press all the world to my heart. But scarcely am I happy in the thought, when other scenes

present themselves to my mind. The park in the dim light of dawn; two maniacs facing each other—for what reason? A flash, and one of them falls to the ground. The movement with which I precipitate myself towards him awakens me from my dream. It is but a dream; and yet it may be the truth! I close my eyes, and even then cannot shut out these horrible phantoms!

What shall I do, Amy? I cannot even shed tears; cannot find a word to console me in my distress; and I wish for you with all my heart!

Strange expedients suggest themselves to my mind. What shall I think of them in to-morrow's daylight? I am clear upon one subject alone; and that is—I wish to hear Impach justify himself. He must do so to me, if he refuse to all the world beside. But how am I to see him?

I do not care whether what I am about to do be against the laws of propriety; I feel that I cannot act otherwise. I shall send Fanny with a message to Herr Impach's house, telling him to be in our garden at noon to-morrow morning.

What will he think of me? He cannot think worse of me than my utter regardlessness has caused him to.

And I? How shall I get over the long hours that must elapse before I see him? How often shall I repent having sent for him?

Had I but you, Amy! You would help and advise me! But tell me, why did you not warn me when you saw me hurrying towards my destruction? My letters must have shown you what I was coming to, long ago!

Do not take my words amiss, Amy! I am so unhappy that I feel the necessity of accusing some one—anyone. I never spoke openly in my letters. But how could I explain the burning impatience with which I was wont to expect Herr Impach, when I knew not myself why it was so? How speak of the nameless grief or the enthusiastic joys I felt, when I knew not what to ascribe them to?

Dear Amy, when you write, approve all I have done and mean to do. By that time the die will be cast and my fate sealed.

Your ELEANOR.

XX.

HEILIGENSTEIN.

Dearest Eleanor,—By the time you receive this letter I shall have had one from you, to free me from my anxiety about you, my dear, dear friend! Unhappy one, what is to become of you? Although I know that my advice will come too late, still I must write and justify myself. Poor Eleanor! I have long since known the secret of your heart. I knew that you had given your heart to the young artist long before you dreamed of love. It would be impossible to love you as I do, and not guess the secret of your soul.

Still, Eleanor, so long as you had not a misgiving on the subject, I had no right to awaken you. You were like the somnambulist, who, with firm and steady step, walks along the edge of a precipice; who will, if undisturbed, in all probability regain his home in safety. The warning word which awakens him may throw him into immeasurable

depths, may cause his destruction.

Therefore, Eleanor, I did not warn you. You did not know what your rebellious little heart was about; unconsciously you were happy in his presence. You might never have come to a clear perception—a prolonged absence of the artist might have allowed others to please you, and your vessel might have entered the safe port of a happy marriage before you had discovered the dangerous cliffs that had threatened to shatter it to pieces. Had I warned you this would have been impossible. The knowledge of the disease was in your case more fatal than the disease itself; you could not then unconsciously have escaped danger. Had you been less ignorant of the true state of things, you would have read between the lines of my letter, and would have been alarmed. What I wrote could help you, once you had made a first discovery—the very first signal I dared not give.

What are you to do now? Dear girl, I am without the least anxiety on that account, for I know that your pure heart can only dictate noble behaviour. You will do what satisfies your brother and your own conscience, even at the cost of your happiness or your life! Still on one point let me warn you. Although I am but a few years older than you, I have had time to learn that in calm judgment we seldom go wrong in this world. Everything, dearest, is less bright than we have dreamed it. Your brother never doubts the guilt of the young

artist: you are quite sure that he is innocent.

Pardon me, Eleanor, if, in choosing between these two alternatives, I stand on your brother's side. His high mind and clear judgment we both consider a standard in every question. You would not be Eleanor, if for a moment you doubted the innocence of him who stole your heart. But think, dearest, if all he has said and done up to this day be but hypocrisy, if he really be guilty, then you do not, cannot love him. Consider well before you act. Above all, trust to your brother, who has never yet been unjust to anyone. If you can persuade yourself that he is guilty, then will you spare yourself a thousand pangs.

Your brother, Eleanor, must have been entirely absorbed by other interests, or he could not have been blind to what was happening around him. Has he found what he has so long sought in vain—the woman with whom he would choose to pass his life?

I close this letter in my anxiety for you, and sincerely hope that a letter from you brings better news.

XXI.

Thank heaven! How many times have I sighed that exclamation.

He is innocent. The noblest man in all the world—the one most worthy of my love!

And I have spent six days, Amy—six days for which I deserve all the joys of a happy future.

But you are impatient to hear what has happened. I could write nothing but tears until to-day, so I preferred not writing at all.

When Fanny entered the artist's house she found it in the greatest confusion. A duel had taken place: Walter had been slightly, Werdan seriously, wounded. After having been told this, the silly girl gave her message all the same, but the landlady informed her that the young man would most certainly not be able to go out of the house for a long time.

Fanny went daily to ask how Walter was. Yesterday he sent word that he would be in the garden towards evening.

I ordered a fire in the pavilion, and was quite delighted when Dorothy got ready about four o'clock to spend a long evening with a friend of hers. Ernest had gone to an Assembly.

You can well imagine how my heart beat when Fanny came to say that Herr Impach was waiting for me in the pavilion. I had scarcely thrown my fur cloak over my shoulders when my conscience revolted against what I was about to do. I threw the cloak down, and said to myself, "If I have all the defects of our rank, let me exercise at least some of the virtues that belong to it. A Waldemberg has no business to give a secret rendezvous in the garden. What I do I will do openly."

"Take Herr Impach into my small sitting-room," I said to Fanny.

Do you think, Amy, that it was the absence of Ernest and Dorothy that gave me such confidence?

With anything but a firm step I entered the room, where he awaited me. He rose, and slowly moved to meet me.

"I could not come before, as you desired. A slight wound in my shoulder ——"

"The consequence of a duel with Count Werdan," I interrupted.

"You know that also?"

"Does this also imply a confession of your guilt?" I asked.

"You believe in my guilt?" he said, and shrunk back. "Have you for a moment deemed me the most wretched villain on earth? and do you summon me here to listen to such a confession from my own lips?"

He dropped into a seat. I feared for a moment that he would

become unconscious; but the earnest expression of the face never relaxed. With his eyes fixed on mine he waited for an answer.

"On the contrary," I replied, "I am the only one who does not doubt your innocence. But I wish you to explain your strange behaviour."

"There never was anyone unhappier than I am," he cried. "The only way of showing my gratitude to you is forbidden to me. I am bound to silence by a word of honour."

"A word of honour?" I asked: and began thinking, as from the face, pale with the loss of blood, I looked to the arm he wore in a sling.

The truth flashed upon me as if by inspiration. I saw it all. Werdan had stolen the picture for his uncle. He had found some pretext by which he got a copy from Walter. To think a word binding in such a case was madness.

I walked up to him, forced him to remain seated, and then spoke to him in a tone which was certainly not a whisper:

"Werdan is the villain! You knew not a word of the fraud until my brother discovered it. You copied the picture without an idea what was to be done with the copy. Deny that if you can."

He turned away, covered his face with both hands, then whispered, "I cannot tell you an untruth: it is so."

"Then you are not bound by any word of honour! The duel has freed you from your promise."

He looked up at me again, his eyes glistening as if wet with tears. I sat down opposite to him, and after a while asked him to tell me all.

All was as I had imagined—all but the agony he suffered in that dreadful hour.

"What I felt during that short time," he said, "could alone excuse the look with which I presumed to meet your eyes. Without that hour, the secret of my heart would have been for ever hidden from Princess Eleanor. On my knees, I shall beg your forgiveness—shall pray that, through the fault of that moment, the doors of my paradise be not closed upon me for ever. A friendly word from time to time is all I ask."

He had risen from his seat and turned from me as he spoke the last words. I could hold back no longer.

In an instant I was at his side. I laid my hand on his shoulder, and, half unconsciously, I poured forth the longest speech I have ever made:

"So that is your opinion of me? Of course, being a princess is reason enough to enable anyone to be for months the object of a modest, but passionate devotion; to see the development of an incomparable talent, combined with every noble quality—and yet remain untouched. And when he who owns all this risks his name, his honour, and even his love, for no other purpose but to be true to a

carelessly-given word, she sees him accused and justified, and yet is as cold as marble! Do you really think, sir, that a princess must needs be without a heart? Could you have loved the wax doll you imagine me to be? Don't you think, Walter, that I too can love, perhaps yet more devotedly than you?"

I laughed and cried at the same time; and when he turned to me, with eyes starting from their sockets, and a face ten times paler than it ever was before, I threw my arms round his neck and cried, Amy, as I have never cried in my life, for the tears I had shed before were inspired by suffering, but those drops fell from unmixed joy and rapture.

What he told me afterwards I cannot repeat. All I know is, that it is well worth one's while to be a princess, if utter despair of success alone inspires men with *such* love.

That I am the happiest of mortals, you may well imagine. But what is to be done now?

I shall go to Ernest to-morrow, and confess all. How delighted he will be to hear of Walter's innocence! How astonished to hear of his Eleanor's love! Ernest once said: "You know that neither your mother nor your ancestors waited until their hearts spoke." Were those words meant to imply a warning, or a prohibition?

A whole world might step between Walter and me—it would not separate me from him. I have often heard them praise the indomitable persistence of our race: it shall be put to the proof. Death or victory shall be my watchword.

Ernest will ask for time to consider. Will you, Amy dear, use all your influence with him to persuade him in my favour? By that action you will become a mother to me. My poor mother would have been favourable to Walter. A lock of her hair, which I always wear, once mixed with Walter's fair curls: the colour was so like hers, I scarcely found my lock again.

And now, farewell, Amy! I require time to muster courage for to-morrow. I wonder whether a soldier advancing to battle feels what I feel at present?

Good-night, Amy! All good angels protect me to-morrow!

Your Eleanor.

XXII.

Dear Amy,—I am in such a state of excitement that I tremble all over—know not whether my hand will obey my will and write down all I have to say.

I had been afraid to meet Ernest at breakfast, but without reason, as he remained in his study and never appeared at all. As soon as I could get rid of cousin Dorothy, I directed my faltering steps towards the library. I thought that the best thing would be to begin without

preliminaries. When I opened the door, Ernest was walking up and down the room.

He turned, and I saw that he could scarcely force the usual smile on his lips. He had a letter in his hand, and after having kissed my forehead, he said:

"This letter, Eleanor, informs me of something so shameful that can with difficulty believe my eyes."

"Ernest, you alarm me! May I know what it is?"

"Of course; you must know, if it be only to warn you against trusting people too easily. Could you believe, Eleanor, that Werdan, whom I trusted as myself, whom I often called my best friend in the world, has been guilty of an act of felony?"

I tried to interrupt him, but he continued:

"I have received a letter from old Baron Gerhardt, in which he uses the strongest terms to speak of his nephew's behaviour. Werdan's cousin, and rival for the old man's inheritance, had heard of the scene in our house. He has been happier than I in getting at the truth, and has unmasked Werdan, who is guilty of the horrible deed. Do you hear me, Eleanor? a nobleman, and a cheat, a swindler, a thief!"

Ernest looked up from the letter, and met my glistening eyes.

"But this is my good news!" I exclaimed. "The whole story tells us nothing but this:—Herr Impach, whom you thought had cruelly wronged you, is innocent. Did this never strike you, dear brother?"

"What an optimist's talent you have for looking at the bright side of everything, and turning pain into pleasure. I must confess, to my shame, I had never thought of Impach at all in this business. The young man has been cruelly wronged, and has borne his misfortune manfully. He shall be well rewarded for his behaviour in this sad affair. Nothing we can do for him is too much. I wish I could find out what would be of great service to him!"

"Ernest, I know something which would make him happy beyond all measure!"

"Speak, then, you clever girl!" Ernest said, smiling.

Amy, you know what a coward I am, and can imagine how my heart beat at that moment. I could distinctly hear it like a hammer. My knees would scarcely bear me; golden stars were madly dancing up and down before my eyes. But now or never, I thought, and called up the courage of my whole life. I walked up close to my brother, and without bowing my head, I said:

"I have the honour, Ernest, Prince of Waldemberg, to ask of you the hand of your sister Eleanor, for the artist, Walter Impach!"

As when the sun suddenly sinks below the horizon and leaves a landscape in grey twilight, so did every trace of a smile fade from Ernest's face as he listened to those words.

Long after I had ceased speaking he stood there, his body bent

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forward, his eyes staring wildly, pale as if lifeless. He seemed to be listening with his whole body.

At last he whispered, "Is this serious, Eleanor, unhappy one?"

I could only bow my head, and then take the place by his side to which he pointed in silence.

"If I did not know that you, like all of us, were not in the least light-hearted or careless, I should heed your mad words as little as they deserve. But I know you, and feel sure you will lend a willing ear to reasonable advice. Therefore will I show you how you have gone astray, and lead you back into the right path."

I pressed his hand, and shook my head, but I did not dare to interrupt him.

"Every man in this world inherits from his parents a part of their nature, tastes, and inclinations, which they in their turn have inherited from their fathers. Education and associates complete this inheritance, and form man's character in so decided a manner that, do what we will, he can never completely change it. Transplant man into a different region from that in which he has grown up, and misery will in most cases be the result. You have grown up in the midst of wealth; you are the favourite spoilt child of those to whom in this world is assigned the very first rank. Impach you never saw but when he moved in your own world. You have admired him, loved him, if you like, while you saw him as your equal. The romance, dear child, of which your little head is full, will not be understood by our world, who will simply say, 'A Waldemberg has taken a fancy to a fine young fellow!' will shrug its shoulders, and turn its back upon you-for to accept the young man as its equal you cannot expect it to do. Such a marriage, Eleanor, is not only impossible; it would in itself be the most miserable affair I can think of."

"Ernest," I replied, "I do not wish to reproach you, but remember your own words: 'An artist is everyone's equal.' When you said that, you laid the first seed of a powerful tree, which you now think you can uproot without an effort."

"You did not understand me rightly at the time. An artist is most certainly everyone's equal—but only so long as he stands at his easel, Eleanor. In life there are other hours too, and during those hours he is what he was born,"

"As long as he paints he is a nobleman in his own right. At other times he shall be one through me."

"No, Eleanor. He does not rise to your own level, but you descend to his. This marriage would not elevate him—it would degrade you. And do you think the hour would never come when you would repent of having given yourself away so rashly? when you would blush for him? when those who now think it an honour to speak to you would turn away from you?"

"The more shame for them! It is surely no fault of mine if they are so mean. But, Ernest, I do not care for those who do not judge man by his true worth; who despise me if I give my hand to one who is not of themselves. I tell you plainly, Ernest," and as I said so I rose, "I would rather become poor and unknown as a peasant-girl, than renounce Walter. What else do I want if I have both him and you?"

"Ein hüttchen nur, auf grüner Flur!" Ernest said, mockingly. "Eleanor, you do not know what it is to be poor. You have not even an idea how much the dress is worth you so carelessly trail on the ground. I feel as if I were speaking to a foolish child. Eleanor,

this is a thing not to be thought of."

"But I tell you, Ernest, that I can never cease thinking of it all my life. I never knew you value outward qualities more than real ones; and if these are to be considered, have you not a letter in your hand which speaks volumes in Herr Impach's favour? Had Werdan been as rich as Arsent, you would not have hesitated a moment in giving me to him. Of course, you knew nothing then—but when you compare the two, does not Walter stand before us in brilliant light, whilst Werdan shrinks into hideous darkness. Can you be angry with a young girl who, in her leisure hours, compares the man whose every word implies a noble heart, with him who, besides his birth, can boast of nothing else on earth?"

"And have you done that, Eleanor? Fool that I was to trust you

to this young man!"

"Stop, brother! I give you my word that, until the moment when we all gave Walter up as lost, I never dreamed that my heart was his. No; until then I was all you could wish me to be. Had I known how things stood before, I should have tried to conquer this love of mine, for then I might have deemed it unworthy of me. Now, brother," I concluded in a whisper, as I threw my arms round his neck, "now it is too late; for now I am proud of my love, and consider it the purpose of my life."

"Poor child, and yet you must renounce it."

"Renounce, Ernest? You utter a word which for me has no existence. Let me tell you this: I love Walter so much that if to-morrow he said, 'Follow me into the furthermost part of the world,' I should most certainly do it, though not without having first knelt day and night before you, Ernest, to obtain your consent. Be moved by me, brother? You cannot deny me long, for I feel that my reasons are inexhaustible—my prayers will not cease but with my life—you cannot resist me in the end."

In silence Ernest paced the room, so absorbed in thought that he took books from the shelves, opened them without knowing what he did, and then put them back in some wrong place. His silence

increased my anxiety. Had I asked for something so utterly impossible as to call forth this cruel resistance?

"There are things, Eleanor," he at last began, "which a man can with difficulty explain to a young girl. Still it must be done. Man is proud, Eleanor. Be a woman never so devoted, her devotion never entirely overcomes the pride of him who from his cradle thinks himself a lord of creation. Impach has shown us that he is all we can wish for in man; therefore alone do I speak of him thus. Do you think that he would really be happy with you? Not that look of triumph, Eleanor! Let me, a man, judge another man by myself. If he has loved you all this time, as you assure me he has, then were you, in his eyes, an unapproachable, forbidden object; for I have never seen him betray, by the least sign, what he felt. You suddenly give yourself to him-you, to whom he was wont to look up as to a higher being. Believe me. Eleanor, he will accept the gift with reluctance. He has not obtained you by insurmountable efforts; his arm has not won you; you gave yourself to him, and to receive a gift is averse from man's nature. Every kind word, every caress, he must consider an undeserved boon; and this continual gratitude is no safe foundation for a life's happiness."

"Ernest, it is hard that I should be obliged to explain to you how Walter loves me. Of this, however, I can assure you: Walter can accept anything from me, without owing me thanks. His sufferings

have placed every obligation on my side."

"Yours is the enthusiastic devotion of the woman who deems she has found 'the world's one man.' Eleanor, I have sought for it all my life, and never met more than the fragile love which, like a lighted straw, every blast can extinguish. Must I meet it now in you, where it drives me to despair?"

"Oh, you men, who always praise their experience! You have sought for true devotion, have you, and never met it? Ungrateful man! Ernest, if you had only chosen to see! You owe it to this hour alone if I break my word, and tell you that no man was ever more de-

votedly loved than you are --- "

Amy, forgive me! You should have seen the light in his eyes, when he came near me, laying his hand on my shoulder, intently gazing at me. 'Twas he, not I, pronounced your name. When I nodded, he sank back in a chair and hid his face. Had I known how he loved you, nothing would have kept me from speaking long ago.

Amy, dear, what a good heart mine must be. I forgot the miserable state of my own affairs, and was happy in your and Ernest's happiness. When I did remember how things stood, however, I thought I

must make use of my time while he was in this soft mood.

"If the world contained a second Ernest, brother, I should certainly have preferred him to Walter, for I certainly do not mean to

say that I disdain the good things of life. Amy is luckier than I—her heart chose first, and her reason will approve the choice of her heart. But confess frankly, Ernest, would you have liked Amy not to notice you had you appeared to her in less brilliant colours? What

you would like in Amy will you blame in me?"

"Eleanor, you torment me cruelly! I am only thinking of your welfare in this matter; I do not take myself into consideration, and our family but very little. Were Amy in your position, and I the happy one "—you would have given worlds to see the expression of his face just then, Amy—"were I the happy one who, although destitute of name, fame, or fortune, had won her heart, I would speak otherwise. As her brother, however, I could not honourably say anything but what I have told you, and once more earnestly repeat: 'Desist from your mad purpose—desist!'"

He spoke in softer tones, and a very slight ray of hope dawned upon

me. Had you but been here!

"Brother, do not speak thus," I once more began. "I love Walter so earnestly and deeply that your voice might become almost hateful to me, if it never ceased to speak against the choice of my heart. Hear me, Ernest, for by the memory of our poor mother I pray and

implore you to make her orphan happy!"

"You do wrong to remind me of our poor mother, Eleanor. I still see her, as she rallied her last forces to lay you, a baby, in my arms. 'Protect my child,' she said, 'protect it from all the dangers of this world. Do not allow passion's storms to blow over this fair little head. I would rather not have her too happy, than think that she might some day be miserable!' It was thus our mother spoke in her dying hour. It is as though she had had some foreboding of what has to-day happened. Her own words tell you how she would have decided."

"Not if she had known Walter!"

"One thing more, Eleanor. If I, your guardian, give my consent to this unheard-of marriage, what will the world say? And we must mind what it says, for we have made it the arbiter of our actions. Shall I not be likened to the faithless steward in the New Testament?"

"Ernest, if I was wrong to remind you of our mother, surely you did worse when you recalled the guardian to me! Have you forgotten how old I am? Have you forgotten that in six months' time your responsibility as guardian ceases? Oh, it is cruel that I should be forced to use such arguments! Do you not know, Ernest, that my love can make me forget my duty, my feelings towards you, everything? What would Amy not do for you? But no brother steps in to separate you two!"

You see, Amy, that my words were becoming each moment more bitter. Still, although I repented of them as soon as they were spoken, I did not recall them, for I felt that my cause was just, and that all must be said to win it.

"You have lost yourself in a labyrinth of sentiment: you are no

longer Eleanor, my quiet, clever Eleanor!"

"No, I am not! Was it really so great a merit to grow up like a flower, without a throb, without a passion? I feel quite myself, although faculties that slumbered within have at last awakened to life. A new phase of my life has opened, and I am no longer Eleanor of Waldemberg—I am Eleanor Impach, for whom I have no cause to blush. Brother, you abuse your power to make me unhappy, for I feel it—I could not buy my independence at the price of your love!"

What I looked as I spoke this I cannot tell, but Ernest faced me for some time in silence, tokens of wonder and even admiration in his eyes. Where I gained the courage to speak those words I know not. After a pause, Ernest took both my hands in his, and then said:

"God alone knows what torments you have inflicted on me this day! Why did you at the same time speak words that must needs have made me happy beyond measure? Eleanor, I cannot see you miserable, but I cannot allow you to purchase your present happiness at the price of a life's peace. If your love resists time, then alone a chance of future happiness is to be thought of. Wait one year from this day, and, if you then speak as you have spoken to-day, I will give my consent, and allow Eleanor to step from the ducal palace to the studio of the artist,"

"Ernest, my brother! You think to frighten me by a short year! You do not know me or Walter. But if you require this evidence of our love, be it granted."

. "In the interval, Eleanor, you neither see the artist nor correspond with him. He shall undertake a journey, and you will help me to

prepare a home for Amy."

What I had not done when I entreated, I did now in my gratitude— I knelt to Ernest. Merciful heaven! I can scarcely believe in so much

happiness; and am not sure if I dream or wake.

. . . To-day, when he has received Walter, Ernest will start for your house. He brings you this letter, and presents Walter to you.

Greet him once more from me.

I shall soon see you again, now, dearest Amy—beloved sister.
Your Eleanor.

XXIII.

Believe me, Geoffrey, were I to think of what I have outwardly gained alone, I should most certainly refuse it at the price of the trials I have gone through! But ten times would I suffer them to gain the heart I now call my own.

Oh, Geoffrey! What is all the bliss of other mortals to my happiness! Two days more, and I stand with Eleanor at the altar!

The torments of doubt, nay, of despair, have been succeeded by the inebriating feeling of safety,—the knowledge that I may spend a whole life of immeasurable happiness side by side with her, whom no devo-

tion can ever repay what she has done for me!

The first weeks of our new life we will spend in that quiet valley of the Alps where Eleanor first dreamed of love. Then we come to Italy—this time you may believe me, Geoffrey. I have great plans for the future; we will spend several years in Italy, and it is there I will call into life the works of art my fancy already paints in vivid colours. Although no Raphael, I must become worthy of my "Fornarina." Twice already has she been the cause of my progress!

But happy people have few words! Good-bye till we meet in Rome!

Yours, WALTER.

XXIV.

Friend of my Walter!—Before he could seal it I have taken this letter from him. I was not to read it, and yet I wish to add a few words.

He thinks he has monopolised happiness, and I waste all my eloquence on him in vain to persuade him that I am far happier than he can be.

What I have had time to tell him over and over again shall not be unknown to you.

My brother's happiness at the side of the noble, modest girl, who for years knew no greater delight than the thought of him! When he had once left me, he did not return until he had brought back with him Amy, Princess of Waldemberg. Perhaps moved by the lively part I had taken in the happy event of his life, one evening, as he had one arm round Amy's waist, he asked, with an arch smile:

"How do matters stand, Eleanor?"

I could not see the expression of my own eyes when I looked up. All I know is that Ernest, perhaps entreated by Amy, wrote that night to Walter, and called him back. We were to spend the last months of our year of trial together.

I knew exactly how long the letter, and how long Walter, would take, and yet I thought I should die before the moment came in which I was to see him before me. How patiently had I waited all those months, without a word of longing, without a word of regret! And during those few days I scarcely recognised myself. Eleanor seems to bear misfortune better than happiness!

I am not sure that I might not have run off to meet him some day, had not Ernest brought me something to quiet my throbbing heart.

Walter's letters to Geoffrey!

Some good angel must have suggested to you the idea of sending them as a sort of evidence to Ernest—you have become my best and truest friend through those delightful pages. And yet I envied you, during a moment, for having known the depths of Walter's heart, our wonderful meeting, his great love, long before I dreamed of what was going on. But tears soon washed away every trace of envy, and now I am waiting impatiently for the hour when I can stretch my hands out to you, and let their pressure tell you what a friend you are to us both.

How happy we are! You will see it in our eyes—which by that time will leave off becoming moist—as soon as they meet. We have had to buy our happiness so dearly that it is almost natural that the tears, which did not flow during darkness, should now take their

course, when the sun is shining so brightly on our lives.

How much we have to tell you! But our history contains some dark pages besides the bright ones. Perhaps we shall not like to think of them when we meet in Rome. Therefore a name: "Werdan"; and the country which receives the unhappy man: "Russia." I know very little more myself.

I must close this letter, and, before I do so, make a confession, which will induce you to believe how very unwillingly I put down my

pen.

Twilight has succeeded day, and that is the hour which Walter considers the happiest in all the twenty-four. We sit together on the divan, under my picture, between ferns and palms, hand clasped in hand, and speak of— everything that interests us! The days that are coming, the ambitious plans of my artist. But more than that, of the past, which still hides treasures wherewith to make each other happy.

Walter has threatened to ring for lights if I do not put down my

pen-and if he does so, we lose our twilight hour.

Geoffrey, all lovers are selfish. With a doleful look towards this letter, I yet turn to Walter, and in a few more seconds even the friend in the Holy City will be forgotten.

In a month we shall be more reasonable!

For the last time,

ELEANOR OF WALDEMBERG.

(THE END.)

ON THE WYE.

By the Author of "A NIGHT IN A MONASTERY."

THE following pages are but an outline of a few days' progress through one of England's loveliest spots. Some day, perhaps, the picture may be filled in more completely than is now possible.

We started from the Court in an open carriage and a shower of rain: a somewhat untoward conjunction of circumstances. This was not encouraging as a commencement. For some time past the weather had been gloriously bright and beautiful. Now, on the very day of departure for the marvels of the Wye—capricious as a coquette who distributes her smiles and favours by the rules of contrary—it had changed countenance. In the morning alternate clouds and sunshine: corresponding variations in the barometer of our hopes. At noon clouds, but no sunshine: corresponding depression in said barometer. And now, on the very point of setting out, downfall of rain and total eclipse of quicksilver.

It became a debateable point whether to start in spite of this, or remain at home, and await that very uncertain alternative—a more favourable opportunity. E., ever ready with an answer or a suggestion, spoke first.

"Let us risk it by all means," she counselled. "If you put it off, you will not go at all. Unless you start to-day, I cannot accompany you. On Monday, you know, I am due on a visit to Fairford. I cannot put that off any longer. The weather will clear."

This sounded reassuring.

"Besides," said J., taking up her parable, "you have written for rooms at Ross and Worcester, and you will have to pay for them whether you occupy them or not."

J. is an authority in matters of social economy. Had chance made her a man, she would have been a great political economist, and would certainly have risen to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. This is a gift no sensible person would despise.

"Again," remarked A., whose temperament at all times inclines her to indulgence in the dolce far niente, "it seems a pity that all our plans and trouble should be thrown away. Yes, we had better risk it."

At this moment an exclamation of dismay, accompanied by a startled look, broke from all three simultaneously.

"You forget! Our best bonnets! Our dresses for Sunday! They have all been sent to Worcester, with E.'s whole luggage! That quite settles the question."

I felt that the die was cast. Nothing more need be said. Where "loves of bonnets" are concerned, ladies would brave the fire and

fury of a French Revolution. A revolution of the elements could have no restraining power. The order was given, and we departed.

As we turned from the noble building its antiquated beauty stood out conspicuously. It is an ancient and remarkable structure, this old Court, some portions of it dating back to the reign of one of the Henrys. Its massive walls, almost a yard in substance, have stood the test of ages: and apparently intend to run a race with Time. The pomp of royalty, the strut of pride, the charm of beauty, the luxury of wealth, the ring of mirth, the wail of despair: all this its grand old walls have witnessed. Its fine oak panels, its carved beams, its tapestried walls (work of the sixteenth century), all bear witness to ages and generations now long passed away. Its gabled roofs, its mullioned casements, its latticed panes, all seem to bid defiance to the ages yet to come. Impossible to speak of the wonderful view from its windows. The immense tract of rich and varied country, the exquisite valley, the far-off Malvern hills on the one side, the yet farther off Black Mountains on the other. We have neither time nor space here to devote to a mansion that has its place in history; that possesses its annals and its haunted rooms, its romances and its every-day records.

A long sweep, a continual but gentle descent, and we reach the lodge gate, which finally turns us into the high road. Old Charlotte, who is progressing towards her ninety years, hobbles out of her lodge, swings back the gate, drops a curtsy as the carriage passes through, and looks after it: doubtless regretting that sundry shawls and umbrellas conceal the feathers and laces which delight her old eyes

whenever the ladies pass her way.

Poor old Charlotte has not the happiest or easiest time of it. She has long been a lone widow, which may or may not be a misfortune, according to the temperament of her late spouse. But she has a son whose conduct to his mother must be held up, not as a pattern, but as a warning to the rising generation. There are times-happily not frequent-when this unworthy offspring pays too deep a devotion to the cider cask, if he does not fall under the influence of a yet more potent spell. At such periods he becomes possessed of the idea that his old mother, though toiling for him night and day, neglects her duty towards him: and that it is expedient to bring her to a sense of her responsibilities by administering a sound castigation to the poor dame. Occasionally she may be seen issuing from her shell, on a fine spring or summer's morning, with a halt in her gait, and but one serviceable eye; the other being concealed behind a rampart of rainbow-coloured hues. Happy for the son that he possesses a mother, or he and his master would probably arrive some day at a very serious and mutual understanding.

But the Court is out of sight, and old Charlotte too; and we are

bowling away on the road to Ludlow. For the moment it is a narrow road; the hedges rise up on either side, enclosing fields of rich green pasture, and cattle of various kinds cropping the grass or quietly chewing the cud: the old cows looking all the while with their blinking eyes and wise faces as if they were pondering over the affairs of the nation.

What a drive it is! Every step of the way of such beauty as you find only in England, and in the most favoured of her counties. A maze of undulating hills, near and afar off; of richest pastures; of well-grown, waving trees; of running brooks; of splendid hedges; of banks of ferns and wild flowers: whilst every now and again the whole beauty of the scene seems to culminate in one point, and you

long to stop the carriage and gaze around for hours.

Presently, after a drive of some miles, Ludlow itself came into view, with its hilly streets, its church tower, beacon to a most worthy edifice; its famous, most interesting castle, proclaiming its existence and demanding attention from its hill-crowned summit. Nothing can be more beautiful than the situation of Ludlow as you approach it—not as now—but from the railroad. The town sleeping on the hill-side and basking in the hollow; the square tower rising against a background of trees; the hills gloriously wooded, suggestive of all that is sylvan and delightful. The smoke, curling upwards from a forest chimney, adds no little to the rural charm of the scene—as smoke invariably does when thrown out by a background of wooded heights.

We progressed onwards, and clattered into Ludlow; up one hill and down another; until at last we came to a full stop at the station. After all, the rain had rather laid the dust than damped our enjoyment.

We began to hope again.

The train steamed up; the station-master secured a vacant com-

partment; a whistle, a puff, and we were gone.

Our first halt was at Hereford. Here we spent an hour or two for the sake of the cathedral, which never greatly impresses us. We attended service, but could not bestow great praise on the choir. Perhaps they have a reserve force for special occasions. Back to the

station, and onwards again towards Ross.

Here we were on one of the most exquisite bits of railroad travelling in England: the road lying between Hereford and Gloucester. Six or seven times it crossed the Wye. Its rich banks, its winding course, may be traced on all sides; surrounded by an amphitheatre of luxuriant hills, which shift their aspect as the train rushes onwards. The red tinge of the soil gives to the landscape that glow of warmth which so heightens its effect. Look where and when you will, nothing but a bewildering wealth and maze of beauty meets the eye: an effect increased tenfold if the sky happens to be cloudless and the sum is pouring its charm and influence upon the earth. The presence and

absence of sunshine upon a landscape may almost be compared to the presence and absence of love in the heart of man. In the one case all is beauty, warmth, light, morning: in the other all becomes barren, cold, darkness, night. For scenery to have its full power and influence upon the mind and spirit, the accompaniment of sunshine is indispensable.

Ross: with its steep, straggling streets, and old-fashioned looking houses, gable-roofed. It was consoling to find the rain had ceased, though the clouds still lingered. The large omnibus from the Royal Hotel was in waiting, and we had it to ourselves. The manager met us at the door, our note in hand. "Every sitting-room in the house was engaged, and had been for days past, but she had retained excellent bedrooms."

Well, it was no very severe affliction to dispense with a sitting-room for one night. And when one of the bedrooms disclosed its several windows overlooking the Wye, and all that glorious prospect that has become a byword, we felt that this left little to be desired in the shape of accommodation.

Then, combining two meals, we ordered a substantial tea, which was soon made ready for us in the large coffee-room. This, like the omnibus, we had to ourselves. It was getting too late in the year for that phenomenon, the ordinary British tourist, and we profited by the fact. Tea ended, we found that we were just in time for evening service. Some years had elapsed since I last attended service in the fine old church, and I was glad to do so again. As a boy I had spent a few weeks in Ross; the beauty of the neighbourhood had produced an unfading impression upon me. I had never since visited the place, and wished to see how far time and change would strengthen or diminish these impressions.

Is not this at all times a most melancholy and painful pleasure, if the interval be protracted to a period say of only ten years? The last time we visited such and such a spot—and this; the changes that have taken place in others and in ourselves; old friends lost by death or circumstances. 'Tis then we realise the truth and pathos of the

lines :-

"Oft in the stilly night, Ere slumber's chain has bound me, Fond memory brings the light Of other days around me. The smiles, the tears of boyhood's years, The words of love then spoken; The eyes that shone, now dimmed and gone, The cheerful hearts, now broken!

"When I remember all The friends, so linked together, I've seen around me fall, Like leaves in wintry weather,

I feel like one who treads alone Some banquet hall deserted, Whose lights are fled, whose glory's dead, And all but he departed.

"Thus in the stilly night,

Ere slumber's chain has bound me,

Sad memory brings the light

Of other days around me."

All the events that have taken place crowd in upon the brain. The world for a moment seems to be slipping from us. We realise that, most certainly, time ever rolls on, and that we also shall one day change and pass away from the face of things. Our past life rises up before us like the shifting scenes in a phantasmagoria. Who amongst us would not wish to live some portion of that time over again?

In those few weeks of my boyhood I had been much attracted by the branches of a tree that grew within the church, and was trained in front of one of the east windows. The scene is still vividly before me. A quiet Sunday morning. A bird flying about the church during service time; the doors open to admit such cool air as could find its way in. Outside, the green grass, the quiet graves where the dead rested, the waving trees rustling in the breeze. Hot, gladdening summer sunshine pouring upon all; but we in the cool shade of the large old church. The stillness and repose of the Sabbath making itself felt; nothing to disturb the peace, to interrupt devotion; nothing but the soothing monotone of the reader or the preacher's voice, or the diapason of the fine old organ, or the exquisite strains of a boy's solo. Nothing can eradicate this picture from the mind. To this day church never appears so much like church and worship as on a summer's day in a quiet country place, with doors open to the gravevard, and the waving trees and the blue sky, and the song of the birds. it seems to bring us nearer to that haven whither, let us hope, we are all travelling. A different influence, this, from a church in a crowded and fashionable metropolis, with the constant roll of carriages and the utter absence of repose and stillness.

The next morning was cloudy and threatening. A boat had been ordered for us overnight to carry us on to Monmouth, and as soon as

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breakfast was over we lost no time in starting.

As we entered the boat the sun broke through the clouds. This we accepted as a good omen, and such it proved. The wind shifted from S.W. to N.W. The clouds rapidly cleared, the blue sky came out, and for the remainder of the time we were favoured with the brightest and most charming weather. A soft N.W. wind, and white fleecy vapours sailing leisurely, and not too closely, over a canopy of clearest azure. Nothing could be more delicious and exhilarating.

A] couple of strong boatmen took the oars, and we were soon gliding rapidly down the river. It is not possible to imagine the reality, reader, unless you have yourself experienced it. The enjoyment was

intense. The picturesque banks, the green fields, the gloriously-wooded hills; which attain perfection round and about Ross; the bright sunshine, the blue canopy over all. It was exquisitely beautiful. If it would only last for an age, or until such time as body and nerves were thoroughly restored and braced up; ready to begin again, like a giant refreshed, the wear and tear of everyday life!

Our first halting-place was Goodrich Castle: a ruin it was impossible to pass without visiting, if only for the sake of the view to be obtained from its summit. The ruin is full of romance and beauty, with its ancient walls, some of them ivy-grown, its green sward, its old associa-

tions: certainly one of the greatest attractions of the Wye.

Nothing, surely, could exceed the beauty of the view from the topmost heights, on this marvellously clear day. For miles and miles, on all sides, stretched a dazzling, bewildering panorama. At our feet the river ran, cool and glittering in the sunshine. Far and near its winding course could be traced. Hills and valleys surrounded us: on all sides the most lovely, graceful, and capricious undulations. Here a village lay half concealed amidst luxuriant verdure; there the town of Ross, with its conspicuous church spire, upraised its head. The view was as extensive as it was wonderful and varied. True, we had not here rugged mountains and snow-capped heights, rushing torrents or steep precipices. No eagle spread forth its wings to soar beyond the range of vision. But no feature of sylvan English scenery seemed wanting: such scenery as one might imagine set to the music of Handel's Pastoral Symphony. The shadows of the white clouds passing over the sun chased each other over hill and vale, silent and mysterious as if cast by a host of the spirits of the air. Round about us, now resting, now spreading forth, and now gathering together, the rooks, sole inhabitants of a bygone day and splendour, whirled restlessly to and fro, with weird, hoarse clamour.

The scene is not easily matched in England, and we turned reluctantly away. At the foot of the castle we were of course met and saluted by the inevitable old woman with her treasures of ginger-beer and photographs. This particular dame was not old; she was tolerably comely and buxom; and she informed her hearers that she and her ancestors had had the honour of providing ginger-beer to sightseers for

the best part of a century.

"And hard times it now is, sir," she concluded. "Not at all what it used to be. We don't get half the visitors we used to once. The boatmen, a many on 'em, like to get over their work, and persuade their parties not to land at Goodrich Castle. They persuade them it's not worth the time, and that there's nothing to be seen they can't see from the river. So more boats pass us than stop to land."

As if to corroborate the dame's statement, as she spoke two boatloads of tourists passed down the river, paused a moment, looked up

at the castle, and continued on their way. If it be true that this is due to the influence of the boatmen, the sooner the mistake is rectified the better. Many people are easily persuaded; are too ready to trust to the opinions of others rather than exercise their own. It is impossible to exaggerate the loss to those who pass Goodrich Castle, and neglect to visit this time-worn, time-honoured ruin. It dates back to the days of the Saxons, and beneath its walls we feel ourselves in the midst of past ages. Wordsworth, alluding to his well-known poem, "We are Seven," observes: "The little girl, who is the heroine, I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793." Later on he continues: "In the spring of 1841, I re-visited Goodrich Castle, not having seen that part of the Wye since I met the little girl there in 1793. The ruin, from its position and features, is a most impressive object. I could not but deeply regret that its solemnity was impaired by a fantastic new castle, set up on a projection of the same ridge, as if to show how far modern art can go in surpassing all that can be done by antiquity and nature, with their united graces, remembrances, and associations."

Re-entering our boat, we were soon gliding swiftly down the river again towards Monmouth. To describe the progress step by step would be impossible in the limited space at command. Suffice it to say that the beauty of the scene was constant and uninterrupted; that the interest never flagged; that each turn, each bend of the river disclosed its own particular and individual feature whereby to mark it in memory's storehouse. For a considerable distance the scenery was calm and sylvan; but as we approached towards Symond's Yat the banks changed aspect. They became for a time more wild and rugged, the Coldwell Rocks presenting a towering and magnificent surface to the river. At Symond's Yat the cliffs are 600 feet above the level of the sea. Here we landed. The distance by the river from this point to the new weir is from four to five miles; whilst, walking, it is scarcely 600 yards. The boat now pursued its journey, relieved of a portion of its freight, and we commenced the ascent of Symond's Yat. All who possibly can should adopt this course. In the first place, it is a great help to the rowers; and secondly, the view from the summit of the rock is so marvellous that none should miss it. Here we gazed down upon the river, which ran between hills richly clothed with trees to their very summit. The eye was arrested by the amazing wealth of verdure displayed. In all directions, far and near, the capricious and picturesque windings of the river could be traced. In the distance, but one amidst a thousand points and objects of interest, Goodrich Castle reared its head, whence, an hour or two ago, we had gazed down upon a scene less varied, but almost as impressive as this.

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We scarcely knew how to leave it and descend the other side of the hill. But there, at last, were the boatmen coming down the stream, and our journey was not yet over. So again we found ourselves gliding along, drifting downwards: now in calm, untroubled waters, now passing over a small shallow rapid, that, like a shrew, for ever disturbed the peaceful surface of its life by its senseless murmurings. At length, a long reach of river, spanned by a distant bridge, a church spire rising picturesquely amidst trees, and Monmouth stood before us.

It is needless to enter fully into the attractions of the ancient town. Agnes Strickland describes its site as the most beautiful in England: a verdict to be received with hesitation, exquisite as it is. Shakespeare and Gray have sung its praises, in company with historians and novelists. It is supposed to have been a Roman station, and was fortified at a very early date. Its castle, of which little remains, is one of the most celebrated and interesting in the annals of history, as being the birthplace of Henry V.

Landing from the boat, we bent our steps towards the hotel to which we had been recommended. On our way we found little to arrest the attention, with the exception of one or two old curiosity shops, whose ancient china so roused A.'s love of the antique that she could with difficulty be drawn from them. Whilst dinner was being prepared at the hotel we sauntered forth for a further inspection of the town.

As the needle to the pole, as the charmed to the charmer, as a lover to his mistress, so A. insensibly led the way back to the old curiosity shops. This time an outward inspection was by no means sufficient, and I entered with a feeling of resignation. Il faut payer pour ses plaisirs. But the danger was delayed—delayed, not dismissed. One of the chief rooms, where reposed the most valuable specimens of rare and antique china (we quote from the owner of said china), was locked up, and could not be opened that night. Trembling, I heard a decision given to return the next morning: and knew my fate. This episode would scarcely call for record, but that it subsequently gave rise to a somewhat amusing incident. Whether amusing or not to the present writer, the reader may judge of in time and place.

As for the town itself a very few words will suffice. The streets seemed wide enough and well built in places, but few traces of antiquity were observable in a hasty inspection. The gateway of the bridge over the Monnow was interesting, but, like most other things, spoilt by restoration.

The next morning, instead of continuing our journey to Chepstow by water, it was decided, after some deliberation, to drive thither by the banks of the river. The drive is preferable to the row, and is justly considered one of the most exquisite in England. Every feature of the landscape comes out fully; whilst, on the other hand, towards Chepstow the river becomes so tidal as frequently to leave its muddy banks exposed to view: thus, when seen from the waters—which now lose their transparency and become thick and turbid—disturbing many of the romantic feelings and impressions that have gone before.

It was therefore arranged to start for Chepstow at two o'clock. This would leave time to drive to Raglan Castle and inspect the ruins. Soon after ten the hotel supplied a handsome barouche and a capital pair of horses, and we set out for Raglan.

A drive of eight miles along the Abergavenny road, picturesque, like every drive in this neighbourhood, and full of varied and striking beauties. No longer the river Wye, but hills near and distant, clothed with the most luxuriant foliage; trees, and fruit-laden orchards, continuing mile after mile. At length, a sweep round, and we soon halted at the entrance to Raglan Castle. Alighting, we passed through the

gateway.

The sight that met the eye was one never to be forgotten. Here, indeed, we stood before the greatest attraction in this part of the country; before one of the grandest ruins not only in England, but probably in the world. It is a castle full of historic records and associations, many of them of the deepest interest. It was the last castle that defied the power of Cromwell. Here the unhappy Charles I. visited the Marquis of Worcester, and took refuge within its walls in July, 1645. The castle was besieged by Sir Thomas Fairfax, from the 3rd of June to the 19th of August, 1646. An honourable capitulation was then effected; the Marquis proceeded to London, where, contrary to the articles of surrender, he was seized and imprisoned.

From the present ruins an idea may be gathered of what it was in the days of its glory. On entering we were dazzled by the sight. Surrounding the castle was a carpet of the most brilliant verdure, most beautifully kept grass. The magnificent ruin was exposed in all its pride, though not in all its extent. Before us rose the walls, hoary with age, ivy-crowned, battlemented, their summits taking the most broken and picturesque forms, and standing out marvellously against the blue The sky itself was the most favourable to such a scene. A N.W. wind was blowing gently; and the blue of the sky was brought out in intenser and more exquisite contrast by the white feathery clouds that chased each other as they floated onwards. These clouds or vapours did not interrupt the sunshine, whilst they cast their fleeting, cooling shadows over the brilliant sward and the magnificent ruin. I had seen many ruins both at home and abroad, but seldom one equal It may have been that the somewhat unexpected grandeur of the sight exaggerated its influence upon the mind; it is true that a more glorious and glowing day could not have existed; but it is certain that this influence could not have been heightened. Sky, sun, atmosphere, all combined to throw a glamour upon this most bewitching scene, and intoxicate the imagination. The word is not misplaced. It was an intoxication, a dream of delight.

I gazed long upon the scene, finding no words for speech. Then the custodian—whose politeness and attention rendered him worthy the guardianship of such a treasure—conducted us over the whole ruin, which is of great extent. The view from the summit of the towers is very inferior to that from Goodrich Castle; but with so much beauty immediately at hand, the eye scarcely desires to wander away. Finally we visited the photograph room, and were unable to resist purchasing a set of large and exquisitely-finished views, exhibiting the castle in every part. Then we took a reluctant leave, hoping to repeat the visit at some not far distant date. No one staying in this neighbourhood, or passing through it, should neglect to make the acquaintance of Raglan Castle. Let the day be clear and sunny, and they will meet with an enjoyment that, of its kind, cannot be surpassed.

Returning to Monmouth, we started for Chepstow immediately after luncheon. In driving along, the river was seldom lost sight of, which pursued its majestic course to the sea. On either hand the wooded hills arose. Now they contracted, now opened out; now seemed to break up into chains, and now again to unite. Every tint of verdure was there. Here we came upon a wild and rugged spot, there upon a stretch of softest, smiling nature. Now we crossed the river upon a rude, uneven bridge, which seemed to threaten destruction to the whole party, and now pursued our even course beside its cooling waters. Here a house peeped out far up the height, there one nestled in the plain; now a whole village sprang into life and animation. At length the road turned sharply to the left, and there before us reposed the greatest attraction and wonder of the whole drive—Tintern Abbey.

This ecclesiastical ruin is in exquisite preservation. The roof is gone, but the walls are almost perfect. Nothing can be more romantic than its site, surrounded on all sides by richly-wooded hills, whilst the river runs at its very feet. It is a building of Gothic architecture, dating back to the year 1131. Entering the western doorway, we are lost in wonder at the extent of the building, at its beauty and grace, at the wonderful harmony of its exquisite proportions, at the lightness of much of the work which yet for 700 years has told the course of time and witnessed the history of the world. Some of the columns and pillars are still standing, perfect in their beauty. If the word can be admitted, it would be impossible to find a ruin of more refined You feel yourself in the presence of a pile once devoted to sacred objects. Its influence upon the mind is that of a grand old sermon, so directly does it seem to speak to the soul of the things that belong to our peace: the ravages of time, its chances and changes: that world whither its old Cistercian monks have, centuries ago, been summoned.

The most witching time to see this wonderful ruin is said to be by the light of a full moon on a bright night. It is easy to fancy that the imagination would then play strange tricks with us. A distant bell strikes midnight. Passing through the doorway into the interior, the weird shadows may be noticed thrown by the walls, by the windows, by the delicate tracery. In and out of these shadows we picture to ourselves a ghostly procession of monks, who were living, animated men 700 years ago. With slow step they glide along, bearing the weight of years, noiseless in their tread, speechless. We watch them flitting slowly through the north doorway. A cloud obscures the moon for a moment; the shadows and phantoms vanish. But not so vanishes our recollection of Tintern, as we saw it that day beneath the more healthy influence of a brilliant sun. We lingered as long as time permitted, and then continued our way towards Chepstow, the horses freshened by their short rest.

On, and onwards; past the Wind Cliff, which unfortunately we did not then ascend; until at last we entered the quaint, hilly, beautifully

situated town of Chepstow.

Here, too, the sitting-rooms were all occupied, and bedrooms only could be obtained at the hotel. But the coffee-room was large and

pleasant and almost deserted.

We sat at tea, when the calm that is said to precede a storm was broken in upon. A rushing, rustling noise heralded the entrance of three tourists. A lady first, in a pink muslin crossbarred with yellow stripes, shot in upon us like a bombshell. Six feet in height, and breadth in proportion. Head-dress blue ribbons and feathers. Voice powerful. Following meekly in her wake came a very small, wizened old gentleman, perfectly bald: by his shrinking look one might have fancied his hair had at some time been frightened off. The daughter came behind him. The great lady had a monstrous fan, which served the double purpose of cooling her fevered brows and keeping her lord in order.

"Waitar," she cried out at once in the highest of tones; "waitar, which is our table? I ordered one to be prepared for us. Is dinner ready? I am positively expiring of hunger."

The waiter had backed in awe. He went across the room and showed a table laid for three.

"The wine card, waitar," said the lady as she seated herself. "I am positively expiring of thirst."

The waiter rushed to obey the order. A shriek arrested him half way, and brought him back again.

"Waitar! waitar! this dreadful animal! How dare you seat me at a table with animals! I shall expire with fright."

The expiring lady theatrically rose in her chair. The waiter hastened to the rescue, and quietly removed an offending earwig. The lady shook down her ruffled feathers, and clutched the wine card.

"Always the same!" she exclaimed contemptuously, glancing at the list. "Clarets, burgundies, champagnes, port, sherry. Nothing new, nothing out of the way. Waitar, have you no Imperial Tokay?"

"Imperial Tokay, ma'am?" cried the bewildered man. "I—I really don't know. But I'll ask the cook," he added, evidently mistaking the nature of the article.

"The cook!" cried she, violently agitating her fan. "Bless the man, what a fool he is! Where can he come from? But there! it's of no use consulting that card. Bring me a quart bottle of Bass's ale, waitar. After that, a bottle of champagne, iced. I'm positively expiring of heat."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the waiter. "And—and the gentleman?"

"The gentleman!" with scornful reproof. "My husband always takes what I take. Now go about your business and obey my orders. Bring the ale in double-quick time; I'm expiring with fatigue."

Next the lady brought forth a letter from her pocket, broke the seal, and proceeded to read it aloud pro bono publico. From sundry hints it contained, we found the tourists inhabited that portion of the metropolis that lies in an easterly direction from Mayfair, and were now taking their pleasure down the Wye.

"Oh, that woman!" cried E., as soon as she had got upstairs. "How did you all keep your countenances? Let us go out and get rid of the impression."

We sauntered forth in the twilight of the evening, and made acquaintance with the town, which is built on the west bank of the Wye, very near its confluence with the Severn, amidst scenery of the most romantic description. At Chepstow the Wye changes its character. Hitherto it has been a river devoted to pleasure-seekers—with the exception of the barges that now and then go up to Hereford; but from Chepstow Bridge the river is navigable for larger vessels, and consequently it assumes a more commercial and more prosy aspect. The tide here runs in with great rapidity, rises often above fifty feet, and has been known to rise as much as seventy. It is said that in a certain garden there is a well which ebbs and flows inversely with the ebb and flow of the tide. When the tide is at its height the well is perfectly dry, and soon after the ebb the water returns. The well is thirty-two feet deep, and holds frequently fourteen feet of water.

The castle on the banks of the river is a ruin of singular beauty, founded, in the eleventh century, by the Earl of Hereford. In the thirteenth century the greater part of the original structure was taken down, and a larger and finer one erected. Here Henry Marten, one of the judges of Charles I., was confined for twenty years. Here, too, Jeremy Taylor was imprisoned in 1656. The castle, equally with the ruins of Tintern and Raglan, belongs to the Duke of Beaufort.

The next morning, as soon as we had breakfasted, we drove to the Wind Cliff. The magnificent view from its summit must not be passed over. Unfortunately this morning it was misty, and much of its extent was concealed. The cliff is about 800 feet above the level of the river. Even though misty, it was one of the most splendid views to

be conceived. Immediately before us the great red cliffs presented their rugged faces; at their feet the silvery river ran. Looking downwards we had an amazing extent of verdure, and longed to creep into the shade of the trees from the hot glaring sunshine. For several miles the river could be traced, winding beneath its picturesque banks and cliffs. To the left was Berkeley Castle; to the right the town of Chepstow, with its fine ruin; and beyond it a grand view of the confluence of the Severn and the Wye. Far away, like a silvery patch, we could just see the Bristol Channel, and Penarth Point, near Cardiff, with the Steep and Flat Holmes. There, some time before, one of us had spent a turbulent ten days, tossing and chopping about on the rough water: waiting, not for tide, but for a fair wind to carry the good ship right out to sea on her voyage to the Cape.

Even as we looked the hot sun was dispersing the mist, and each moment brought some more distant object into view. But time was passing, and we could not wait for the full grandeur to be revealed. With the veil half raised we left it, and soon found ourselves back in

Chepstow. Here a catastrophe awaited us.

At Monmouth A. had proved as good as her word, and having expended as much in China—old Worcester, old Delft, old Dresden—as would have repaired for a whole month the ravages of an hotel bill, the treasure was carefully packed in a wine case, and, upon leaving, as carefully placed in the carriage. At Chepstow, the case being somewhat cumbersome, the head waiter begged permission to place it in an alcove in the hall, promising to be answerable for its safety. I weakly yielded to the demand—and paid dearly for the weakness.

About to leave the hotel, I went down in search of the china. It had disappeared. The head waiter was summoned; the mystery was

investigated, and brought to light.

A large picnic party had that morning gone off to Tintern Abbey, carrying with them well-stocked hampers and a large case of champagne. But through some oversight or carelessness of the waiters the champagne had been left in the hall, and the box "of rare and valuable old china" had been taken off in its place!

Our own vexation may easily be imagined. But can the reader picture the dismay, the horror and disgust of the picnic party, who, parched with hot travel and dusty roads, burning for a draught of refreshing, sparkling wine, broke open the case and found—nothing but a collection of what, to them doubtless would seem, the ugliest plates, jars, and teapots the whole universe contained!

We, of course, trembled for our prize—trembled lest the rage of the whole party, taking an insane bent, should send back our china

in a very multiplied and fragmentary form.

Nothing could be done. It was small consolation to remonstrate with the head waiter, who in his turn shifted the blame on anyone but

himself, including the boots. Leaving directions with the landlady to have it carefully forwarded to the Ludlow station, we departed.

The result of this unlucky mistake was that the box in due time reached Ludlow. When opened half the contents were found to have escaped, half to have fallen victims. Handles and spouts were lying slaughtered. And A. fell back, in consolation, upon the convenient theory that cracked and mended china becomes more valuable by the process.

"You are rightly punished," was all the consolation I received as we went through Chepstow, "for giving in to that stupid waiter. It was running a most imprudent risk."

"For my own part," added E., "I don't one bit regret the china. It was the ugliest collection of eccentric curiositles I ever beheld. But if our bonnets on their road to Worcester share a similar fate, I for one shall not stir from the hotel to-morrow."

And doubtless she would have been as good as her word.

The train passed over the bridge in the very midst of the exquisite surrounding scenery, which is more like a dream than reality, and pursued its way to Gloucester. Here we spent a few hours with the cathedral, which is of far greater beauty than that of Hereford. Then onwards again, until at length we found ourselves at Worcester, and in the comfortable quarters of the Star Hotel. Here we were fortunate. They had reserved their best rooms for us; and in the end we found their charges just and reasonable: a fact worth chronicling.

One of the first questions from the ladies concerned the luggage. It had arrived in safety. The bonnets were in pristine preservation. This information visibly raised their spirits; and a glance of triumph out of three pairs of eyes informed me that *some* people managed things better than others who trusted to the tender mercies of head waiters. I found nothing to reply. It was Saturday night, and the town, up to a late hour, was noisy with bustle and traffic.

Sunday morning, with its repose and peace, and the service at the cathedral, which we had not seen since its complete restoration. The exterior of Worcester Cathedral has little to recommend it. It is somewhat heavy, dull, plain, and unadorned; guiltless of gurgoyles, flying buttresses, or delicate tracery of any description. But how describe the sight that burst upon the view on passing through the north doorway into the interior? It seemed almost that we beheld a vision, not an earthly scene. Some people have found fault with the restoration, declaring it to be not in the best taste, too ornamental, not sufficiently severe. To us it appeared perfect; and I could almost venture to assert that no cathedral in England can now rival the interior of Worcester.

For the night service it was lighted up; and, as the preacher observed in his sermon, the sight seemed to be more that of a heavenly vision than an earthly reality. This service was held in the nave, but the layclerks and choristers occupied their proper seats in the chancel, which, partially lighted, threw a dim religious light upon the surrounding gloom and was to the last degree effective. Gazing from a distance upon the singers clothed in their white surplices, listening to their voices, "in the pealing anthem swelling the note of praise," it was quite possible and pardonable to close the eyes in a semi-dream, and imagine oneself transported to a higher, holier, and brighter sphere.

The organist officiated at the great new organ on the south side, and after service we begged him to prolong his voluntary. He kindly did so for very many minutes, much to the indignation of the bedesmen, who wanted to be gone. With the dying echoes of the grand harmonies that had swelled in ebb and flow through the arches and fretted vaults of the cathedral, we passed out into the darkness. Worcester may indeed consider itself favoured in possessing within its

boundaries this gem of surpassing beauty.

The next morning E. started for Fairford, where she was overdue; but not without a second contretemps, far more alarming to her than

that of the missing china.

On reaching the station such a crowd and confusion surely was never witnessed. The platforms were thronged, and no porters were to be seen. The station-master, we were afterwards told, was away for his holiday; and perhaps the men were (practically) taking holiday also. One was found at length, and received his orders—to label the young lady's luggage for Fairford, but to keep me in sight whilst I took Instead of doing so, he disappeared with boxes, parasols, rugs, cloaks, and was seen no more. The train was due, but the luggage and the man had vanished.

E.'s dismay may be imagined. The representative of the stationmaster was demanded, and appeared; and he did all he could do. He delayed the train (an express) nearly fifteen minutes; he went, and sent about, looking for the man and the luggage. All in vain. E. went

off minus her possessions, leaving me to clear up the mystery.

Now began the search in earnest. After some trouble, every porter being summoned to appear, the man presented himself. Where he had been hidden did not transpire; but he had sent the luggage off by the Kidderminster train, putting it, he said, in the guard's van; and to that town of carpets it was then on its road. The telegraph was set to work, and matters were made straight as soon as they could be.

To the china factory we proceeded next, inspected the works, and became acquainted with the whole process of manufacturing: one of great interest. Some of the beauties of the show-room proved too tempting for A.'s love of china, which appears to embrace modern as well as ancient specimens; and it was only after a threat of insolvency that she could be induced to relinquish a dessert service of exquisite workmanship but fabulous price.

Bidding farewell to Worcester and its attractions, after lunch, we reached Hereford in time for afternoon service. In vain I endeavoured not to draw comparisons between the two cathedrals. An hour spent with a friend, and we were off again on the final stage of our journey—Ludlow.

We had a long and exquisite drive home from Ludlow in the cool of the evening. As we turned in at old Charlotte's lodge gates, and came in sight of the grand old Court, we acknowledged that since our departure we had seen nothing finer or more perfect of its kind.

It was, after all, without regret that we found ourselves at rest. Much had been seen in a very few days; much of such marvellous beauty that it now appeared as a dream. Time was required to live over again and digest it. All who have seen this portion of the Wye well know that no description can possibly come up to the reality. Those who have not will thank us—not for pointing out to them beauties that are household words amongst us—but for inducing them, it may be, to go and do likewise: to become acquainted themselves with a spot that, in its own way, is scarcely to be surpassed in the world.

CHARLES W. WOOD.



"THY WILL, NOT MINE, BE DONE."

Oh! not when we are weary;
Oh! not when we are sad;
Oh! not when we are downcast,
May that sweet rest be had.
But when the Lord sees best,
When Jesus bids us come,
Then shall we find our perfect rest—
In that, our heavenly home.

Not when our earthly trial Seems more than we can bear; Not when our heart is fainting In unbelieving fear; Not then—oh, no, not then! Times are not ordered thus; A wisdom far beyond our ken Is planning all for us.

Not when our heart is sickening
With hope so long deferred;
Oh! not in that sad hour
May our request be heard:
What though the way seem dark
And hope to ring its knell?—
God's ways are not as ours,
He doeth all things well.

We may not be impatient—
We may not long to go,
For He hath labour for us,
That we must do below;
A fight that must be fought,
A course that must be run,
To bring Him captive every thought
Ere He will say, Well done!

We need not faint or tire
At the trials of a day;
We have His great example
To cheer us on our way.
And oh! 'twill not be long;
The victory will be won;
In our great Captain we are strong—
The fight will soon be done.

We need not look before us,
At the troubles that may come;
It may be ere they reach us,
We shall be safe at home.
But let it not concern us:
The Lord God knoweth best.
His hand will guide us to Him,
And we shall rest—shall rest.

BY THE SAD SEA WAVES.

THE waves are rolling in slowly; the rows of cottages and the one hotel are bathed in an unbroken and a garish flood of light; the beach is dotted with the usual specimens of "the human form divine" that one sees at the sea-shore; while the inevitable small child trots around ubiquitously, overshadowed by a large amount of hat, and displaying an amazing brevity of skirt, and much (oh, very much!) of bare, mottled leg.

Lastly, here am I, uncomfortably seated on a pile of wood, the centre of a swarm of gnats, trying to look as if I enjoyed it, and con-

scious that I am failing miserably.

It is not one of our populous places, resorted to by fashion; but a little primitive beach, sought by those who require cheapness or privacy.

"If," I meditate, "I could only think of an appropriate poem, perhaps I might be able to get enthusiastic over that dreary sweep

of water. There's nothing else for me to do."

Poetry is not my strong point, and I rack my brain for at least three minutes. At last the lines come:

"The sea, the sea, the open sea! The blue, the fresh, the—"

A woman's voice, close at hand, says, "roast veal." What else I hear not, for those two words carry my thoughts forward to dinner. But no—vain hope—dinner is still a thing of the future.

At this point the aforesaid small child sets up a dismal howl, and flies in abject terror from "some dread monster of the deep" (length, one inch and a half) that its grubbing has disinterred. Its fright gives me malicious pleasure; but even that does not last long, and after a long yawn, I rise to go. But at this moment a figure in lilac gingham comes in sight, and I sit down to wait.

She comes along with light, easy steps, and presently she drops down silently beside me. She is a girl of twenty-two, with wavy auburn hair, and a pair of deep-set grey eyes with dark brows and lashes; her mouth is somewhat wide, and her nose short and retroussé; but the lilac gown shows off every curve of a superb figure, and her skin is prettily tinted. Somehow people always look twice at her.

"Well?" I say, lazily interrogative.

"Well?" she echoes. "Look here, Deborah. If I get so bored in this place that I drown myself, just remember, please, that you brought me here."

"W-hy, Ottalie-" I begin, with aggrieved sharpness.

"Perhaps you didn't," she interrupts, contradictorily but placidly. "That is what you are going to say, and I daresay it's true. I did want to come to the sea-side; and—and as we had to bury ourselves somewhere, this antediluvian place, Sone, was as good as any other. And the sea is always nice, you know: only,"—her big eyes turn wrathfully seaward—"there is a little too much of it here, and nothing of anything else! Such a caddish set of people could not have collected at any place but Sone."

"As for the people, Ottalie, I had an idea we wanted to avoid society. Besides, Sone is cheap ——"

"And nasty," puts in my sister.

"Why do you indulge in these words, Ottalie? Sone is not bad, though there is no circulating library," I go on; "nothing fit to eat, and no sleep to be had for the gnats." I end by making a frantic lunge at one of the enemy—of course I miss him. I always do. Ottalie laughs.

"Poor old Deb, you are getting on bravely. Novels, eating and sleeping—sure signs of spinsterhood! Don't think I say it reproachfully. I wonder"—clasping her hands fiercely—"why people ever marry?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"If aunt Rebecca would only die, and go to heaven," she goes on meditatively, "we should be rich."

"And what if we were rich?"

"We could go away ever so far: where nobody would ever see or find us."

"Afghanistan's a good place," I say dryly.

"Yes!" she says, with a short laugh. "Only aunt Rebecca won't. Though she is not a bit of use down here—except to sing hymns."

"You ought to be ashamed, Ottalie."

"I'm not," she says, cheerfully. "You are always wishing, yourself, that aunt Rebecca was gone somewhere."

I wisely affect not to hear.

"Let us go over to the inlet," she adds, jumping up; "anything's better than sitting here."

The inlet is a small bay, chiefly remarkable for its calmness, solitude, and gnats. But why it should have been named the inlet, nobody seems to know.

"Sometimes I think all this must be a dream," Ottalie says, as we saunter along in the heat. "How things have changed! What a contrast it presents to the days when we were with papa, and he was flourishing. This is a wretched life."

"It is a little better than your life last year, Ottalie."

She turns away quickly; but presently begins to hum a tune. Wretched I know it is for her; but any reference to the past she will

not hear from me. Five minutes later we stand on the edge of the water.

Ottalie points to a small rowing boat. "See," she says, "that boat is what I've been trying to get ever since we came here. We'll borrow it for a little while, Deb."

"Borrow it?"

"Just to sit in," she says, jumping in. "Oh, it is cool and pleasant sitting here! Come in, Deb."

I don't know why I always obey her; she knows that she tyrannises

over me. In I get.

"The least little push-so-Deb, will run it off into the water."

The boldness of the assertion locks my lips, and almost before I understand the situation we are skimming away from shore. People have said Ottalie rows well; I know the fact does not comfort me in the least. I close my eyes, and cling to the boat-side.

Ottalie laughs, and begins to sing; so I am left in peace to indulge my fears. I always was a coward on the water.

" Won't you put back, Ottalie?"

But Ottalie only smiles, and sings the louder. Presently, I find myself almost a mile out.

"Four o'clock!" I say, drawing out my watch.

"Is it?" Ottalie asks, lazily. "I know what an inquiring mind you have, Deborah, and I am taking you to explore the Isle of Shoals!" Her eyes flash laughter as I expostulate:

"It is dinner-time. At least, it will be by the time we get back."

"My dear Deborah," she says, coolly, backing water, "I am not a well-regulated individual like you; my appetite does not depend on the clock!" And, as she speaks, she runs the boat into land. "Now let us explore," she says, preparing to get out.

"And let the boat drift off?" I ask, tartly.

"No; don't come out; stay where you are," shouts out a strange masculine voice from the shore. We both start.

"Push off," I whisper, nervously. But before Ottalie, with all her dexterity, can obey, a gentleman, with fishing-basket and tackle,

comes rushing down, and jumps in.

"My girl," he says to Ottalie, as he takes the seat facing her, "the next time Michael sends you to bring a hungry man back to shore and dinner, please don't make a pleasure excursion of it! Row quickly now, and make up for lost time."

Ottalie's back is towards me, but just as I open my lips to answer, she turns to me a very red face, and makes me a sign to be quiet.

The gentleman lights his cigar, and leans back, fixing his eyes on Ottalie.

"By Jove!" he ejaculates presently, "you are pretty, and no mistake."

I have noticed the best of men think themselves at liberty to speak out to a girl the admiration they only dare look to a lady.

Ottalie glances over her shoulder (with a crimson face) at me again, and once more I hold my tongue. Well, perhaps in the position it was best to be silent. We had brought it upon ourselves.

"I would take the oars myself," he adds, "only I gave my wrist an ugly wrench yesterday; so there can be no more rowing for me yet awhile. Tell your father to send you as long as I am helpless—that is, if you want to come. Do you?"

There is a little pause, and then Ottalie answers, in her old, carefor-nothing tone. "Yes."

I hold my breath; but nothing more is said. He only laughs. So he takes us for "Michael's" daughters, whomsoever he and they may be.

I feel dowdy; I feel that we both look just as Michael's daughters might look. I am not much to boast of on orthodox occasions; but now my hat is over one ear, my cotton gown is rumpled, and I can tell that my nose is red, and my face a mass of freckles. Ottalie is also rumpled. Her lilac sleeves are rolled up, and her hat is lying at my feet. Yes, we might surely sit as models for these mythical daughters of Michael.

Next I look at our "fare." He is tall and broad-shouldered, and clean-limbed; his face is rather square, his features are irregular, and his mouth is covered by a black moustache; he is either very dark or much sunburnt. But there is something in his countenance that I like, something also in his voice, and he has the unmistakable bearing of a well-bred man.

Finding he cannot make Michael's daughters talk with him, he subsides into silence, enjoying his cigar. Then we reach shore.

I scramble out first, before he rises; he follows; then comes Ottalie. Once more on land, my courage revives.

"Tell Michael," he begins——but I interrupt him. In my opinion it is high time the farce should cease.

"You are mistaken, sir," I say, tartly, trying to speak de haut en bas. "We are not Michael's daughters."

"Not Michael's daughters!" he repeats. "Then who the dev—I beg your pardon. Then who are you?" But he speaks with a ring of mockery in his tone. What with that, and what with Ottalie's black looks at me, I turn back to speak again.

"We did not go after you—to fetch you—we knew nothing about you. Ott—this lady got into the boat for pastime, believing it to be at liberty; and she was foolish enough to row over to the opposite side of the inlet. We are ladies."

"Thanks," he answers, staring at both of us, and raising his straw hat. My tones may not have impressed him—perhaps puzzled him; for there is a slighting lightness still in him, and anything but reverence

in his face. "Thanks for your kind exertions," he adds to Ottalie, who blushes furiously, and makes no reply.

Raising his hat again, he walks his way, and we walk ours. Glancing back, I see a man in rough costume approach him.

"Good gracious, that must be Michael!" I say. "He will want to charge us for the boat."

Ottalie turns upon me savagely. "Deborah, you are an idiot! Had you only held your tongue, he would never have found us out—never. What does it matter if he did take us for the boat-girls?"

"Had you not better tell me it was my fault we took the boat at all?" I retort. "I wish you would not do these things."

"What a good-looking man he is!"

We walk home in silence, for I don't answer her. Ottalie hates re-

proach, but she is a little ashamed of the escapade herself.

In time we learn that the stranger's name is Daine; he is apparently well-to-do, and is supposed to have come to this little out-of-the-world place, Sone, for a spell of quietness. He lives at the hotel, pays liberally, and "keeps himself to himself," occupying his time with boating and fishing. It is I who hear these items of news, and I try to impart them to Ottalie, but she will not listen. Meanwhile, if by chance we meet the stranger, he lifts his hat in silence, and gazes at Ottalie as he passes. Probably, just as we have heard his name, he has heard ours, and knows that we are not Michael's daughters, but the Miss Peyres. And each time this meeting occurs, Ottalie's blushes grow more ridiculous. It makes me angry with her.

Three Sundays come and go. On the fourth we see our schoolboy cousin, Keith Harland, who has come down to Sone with his mother. Mrs. Harland looks frostily blue, and does not even give us the tips of her fingers to shake. Of course, she did not know we were at Sone, for we do not enlighten the world as to our movements. Her dead husband was our mother's cousin; so the relationship to her is not much; but what it is she is ashamed of. The scrambling, movingabout, shady kind of life that Ottalie and I lead does not enhance our worth in her eyes. Lead it we must, however, until the end comes and the "finis" is said. And then? Well, perhaps, in the Great Hereafter Ottalie and I may attain to respectability.

On Monday morning Keith comes rushing into our lodgings, all excitement.

"I say, Ottalie, what do you think?" he cries. "Who do you think is here?"

"Who is?" asks she, from her place on the music stool.

"Jasper Daine. I have just seen him."

Ottalie strums away and does not answer. She is as red as the poppies outside.

"Who is Jasper Daine?" I question.

"A regular brick," responds Keith. "He was at College with Tom ages ago, and he came over to see Tom last autumn and get some shooting. He has a nice place of his own."

"And is well off?"

"Well off! I wish I was likely to be half as well. He is going to take me out fishing this afternoon. I told him you two were here, and that you were my cousins."

I draw the boy to me as Ottalie leaves the room, and look into his eyes, speaking impressively:

"Keith, you must take care. No tales out of school, you know, about past troubles."

At first the lad, gazing hard at me with his honest eyes, scarcely seems to understand. And I add, "For Ottalie's sake."

"Why, Deb, I hope you don't think there's need to caution me on that score," he says, promptly and half indignantly. "My mother would skin me, I expect, if I could talk about *that*. And serve me right, too!"

Sitting on the bench in our solitary cottage garden at sunset, I see two figures coming across the sands. Can Keith be going to bring that man here? How stupid the lad is!

Yes, on they come, and inside the gate.—Keith eager as the school-boy he is, the other already lifting his straw hat respectfully. Ottalie rises deliberately, turns her back, and looks over the side palings.

"Mr. Daine, Miss Peyre," cries the lad, making the introduction after the manner of his elders. "And this is her sister," he adds, pulling Ottalie round by the arm. "Ottalie, here's Mr. Daine."

Ottalie and I bow stiffly; she puts on her coldest manner, comes back to her seat, and takes it. Mr. Daine sits down, facing us, in a small iron chair. Keith climbs the trunk of the big tree and lodges himself amid the branches. He begins telling of their fishing expedition in the afternoon, and what they caught and did not catch, which leads us on to general conversation. In the midst of it appears the small servant maid.

"Tea is waiting, ma'am," she says to me.

What can I do but ask the intruder to take some tea? We all go into the sitting-room together. I place myself before the table; they range themselves at the open windows. Ottalie's beautiful grey eyes glance up at him ever and anon through their long dark lashes as he talks to her.

"Now, is he not a jolly brick?" demands Keith, as Mr. Daine says good night and leaves.

"Very," cries Ottalie, sarcastically.

"I can tell you, Ottie, all the girls down with us thought so. Not that he thinks much of women," adds Master Harland. "He does not

take to them. And now I must go, or my mother will be outrageous. I dined with him at the hotel—such a jolly dinner!"

"Well, this is very pretty!" I cry, as the boy disappears. "That insolent man, of all others, to make friends with us!"

"Why did you give him tea?" says Ottalie.

"Give him tea! could I help it? And for you to talk so freely with him, Ottalie! I did hope you had learned prudence ——"

"I did hope you had learned prudence," mimics Ottalie. "Mark me, Deborah; if anything upsets our equanimity, our domestic calm, you will have brought it upon yourself."

"Go on, go on, child."

But she does not go on. She turns to the piano, and begins the first bars of the old French song:—

"Partant pour la Syrie, le jeune et brave Dunois."

"Women and moths," I murmur. "She has singed herself once, and she'd like to flutter near the flame again." And I take up the bedroom candlestick.

Day: Sunday. Time: five o'clock on a sultry afternoon. Dramatis personæ: Ottalie, myself, and Jasper Daine, who has just unlatched the gate and is sauntering towards us. Ottalie is on the bench under the tree. I am in the room, looking from the window.

"Been fishing?" she asks, laconically, as he drops down by her

side, and nods to me. Fishing! how irreverent she is.

"No," he says. "I have been boring myself with myself. After inflicting my company on you in the morning, I had not the face to come any sooner; and while I was thrown on my own resources I came to the conclusion that, in point of dulness, Sone and church are about on a par."

I am getting used to this man and his cynical irreverence; but this last startles me, so that I exclaim in reproof. He turns to give me

an amused look.

"As usual, I have shocked Miss Peyre," he says. "But ---"

At this point Ottalie's glove drops. He picks it up, and goes on in his lazy, indifferent manner with some explanation to soften his words away. Then he raises the glove to his lips.

"Violet is my favourite colour and favourite perfume," he coolly

says. "Is it also yours, Ottalie?"

He calls her Ottalie for the first time in my hearing. It is only five Sundays since Keith introduced him to us, yet he calls her Ottalie.

As the aborigines reckoned the flight of time by the moon, so we of Sone reckon it by our solitary landmark—the Sabbath. Keith Harland and his haughty mother have gone again. My thoughts wander off on Ottalie's affairs, and just as I come to the conclusion that she was sent into this world for the sole purpose of ruining my

temper, and getting us both into trouble, his voice startles me—or rather not his voice, but what he says.

"I have called you fast," it says; "even a 'girl of the period.' I never meant to fall in love with you. But yet—I have done it."

There is an odd, half-humourous, half-doubtful tone in the voice; and its owner is clutching Ottalie's two hands. Her head is bent so low, I can only see the outline of a flushed cheek. Apprehension—anger—I hardly know what feeling arouses me.

"Ottalie !"

I may as well call to the moon. She does not hear or heed me. Mr. Daine bends down to her and speaks almost in a whisper. Her eyes—the big, beautiful grey eyes—glance up at him.

In my vexation I retire from the window. In my trouble I walk

back to it. Both of them have forgotten my existence.

"Do you know," he goes on, and my ears are quick, "I began by meaning to dislike you. I did not care for a girl who could be fast enough to row a stranger over the bay and personate a boatman's daughter. Ottalie, how did you subdue my prejudices?—How did you get the better of me? Are you a witch?"

Mr. Daine is certainly an odd lover, if he means it for love, and woos after a fashion of his own; but Ottalie does not seem to object. As he bends to her, the wind stirs her pretty hair, and the water comes rolling in slowly over the sunshiny sand—poor, foolish Ottalie.

"You are a witch, perhaps," he says, after a pause. "On my life

I cannot tell! I only know one thing-I love you!"

"Really and truly do you love me? Really and truly?" asks she, childishly twisting her fingers together, as she rises to her feet, and looks up at him.

"Better than life!" he answers, and takes both the hands in his.

Dismay had held my breath, but I call now.

" Ottalie !"

He hears that, and looks round. She goes and looks out at the murmuring sea. At that moment the maid comes in with the tea-tray, cake, and bread-and-butter. We dine early on Sundays.

"Come in to tea," I call out, in desperate hope of putting an end to

But no; just as though my words were wind, they regard them not.

Opening the gate, they stroll off together across the sands. I take my

Opening the gate, they stroll off together across the sands. I take my tea alone, with a sinking heart. How intensely foolish Ottalie is!

The wildest imagination could not, I fear, picture Deborah Peyre as a "praying woman." Of course I go to church; I go this evening. I have called myself a miserable sinner scores of times; now I feel I am one, or that she is, or he is; or that we are all sinners together. I get into a back pew, and I believe I pray. I try to pray; more earnestly perhaps than I had ever tried in my life. And after the service is

over I go home and wait. I see two dusky figures pacing the sands together just beyond the gate, and I fold my hands tightly and wait.

The gate clicks at last. Ottalie comes in, and stands blinking in the doorway, half dazzled by the light.

"Will you condescend to tell me how you intend to wind up the highly creditable farce you are playing?" I cry, in helpless rage.

"Wind—it—up," she repeats, the brightness fading all at once out of her face. Then with a sudden dash of recklessness: "I don't know. I don't think it's a bad plan, Deb. I let myself drift—drift—drift. It is so much easier!" And she laughs a strained little laugh that cannot take the shadow out of her eyes.

"Understand this much," say I; "if you do not put an end to this,

I will."

She gets as white as her dress, and seizes my arm.

"No, oh, no! Deborah, you are joking; only joking, are not you?" And she drops my arm, and sinks on her knees beside me.

"Am I given to joking?"

"But you won't," she repeats. "I will—do what you want—only not now, Deborah, not now! Let me be happy, please, just a little while. Do you grudge me these few days, because my life has been so happy?"

I am silent. She clasps my arm to hasten my reply.

"Have I had so happy a life, Deborah?"

Heaven knows that she has not—of late years. But how shall I answer her? What am I to do? In one sense of the word I am at rest; she has too much rectitude, too much pride to give cause for real fear; but—there are complications.

"Deborah, dear Deborah, won't you promise me?" and her voice breaks, and the firm white arm creeps up round my neck, as her eyes

peer into mine. "You will not-tell?"

How shall I answer her?

"Deborah, dear Deborah," she cries again, putting her lips close to my cheek.

How still the room is as her voice falls. How quiet it is outside—how quiet!

"No," I say, shortly; "I will not tell. Unless I am forced to it, Ottalie; understand that."

After a little, she gets up and goes towards the door. I follow her. "Ottalie," I begin. She stops and looks over her shoulder, half-angrily, half-entreatingly.

"Hush," she says. "I am forgetting it—that. You said I might be

happy-just a little while."

"Then," I say, bewildered out of my equanimity, "you will be the first person who was ever made happy by acting a lie."

Ottalie turns a scared face upon me, moans, and escapes from the room.

What a culpable woman I am! Bribed with a kiss to promise! But—poor Ottalie! And what a reckless, miserable mood she is in! I hear her voice ringing out overhead: "Et l'ivresse, l'ivresse, l'ivresse et l'amour!"

Not an exalted sentiment, is it, reader?—and for Sunday night! Well, she learnt it in a hard school, this poor Ottalie of mine.

I toss and turn my night away. Ottalie, I fancy, does the same. When she sits down to breakfast her face is pale, her eyes are encircled by purple rings. We scarcely speak to one another.

Later, I come into the room again with my things on, look at her, and wait.

"I am not going out," she says; so I leave her sitting at the window. If she is happy, she is a better actress than I thought—she hides it so well.

For three hours do I poke jelly-fish with the end of my sunshade. But jelly-fish are phlegmatic, and the sun is hot. In the course of time it becomes monotonous, and I rise and go homeward.

As I close our gate I hear Jasper Daine's voice. Sometimes it has struck me as being musical, but now it fairly sets my teeth on edge. What does it all mean? Has she told him herself? Well, it may be better, I think, as I walk in. Ottalie is bolt upright near the piano; and Mr. Daine is tramping up and down the room. He comes to a sudden pause before me.

"What is the matter?" I ask, not in the least because I require information. I think he guesses this, for he eyes me in an extremely unpleasant way.

"The matter! It is this," he says in his harsh voice: "last night I was led to believe your sister would be my affianced wife; nay, that she was. To-day, when I ask about our wedding-day, she tells me she is already—married. That is all that is the matter, Miss Peyre."

I untie my hat-strings and sit down; I have not the least idea what else to do.

"Forgive me," she says, or rather moans, coming a few steps nearer him, with a scared, pitiful face.

"For drawing me on! For making a fool of me! For allowing me to love you as I have never loved mortal yet! And when I know not whether to believe this strange assertion, and ask what your name is—and why, if you are married, you have let me call you Miss Peyre, Miss Ottalie—you refuse to speak! Madam, I appeal to you,"he adds, turning fiercely to me, "is this the way to treat a gentleman? Have I, or have I not, a right to ask an explanation?"

"Tell him, Deborah; tell him all," she says, trembling.

But I hold my peace stubbornly. I feel angry with everything and everybody. Her own folly led her into this; let her get out of it as she can.

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He stands, waiting for me to speak. Ottalie gives a great sob, which disarms me. In spite of myself I begin, and give him the outlines of the tale.

Our father was Major Peyre, of the — Regiment. He was not a good man; to say the least of it, not a judicious one. He drank and he gambled. After our mother's death Ottalie and I were quite in his power. One of his gambling friends, to whom he became largely indebted, cast his covetous eyes on Ottalie, who was but a young girl, shy and inexperienced. My father gave her to him in marriage. Before two months were over, my father died. Mr. Daine, who possibly knows Major Peyre by reputation, may remember what his death was. Before the year was out, that man—Ottalie's husband—fell into trouble and crime. He was tried for it—tried, Mr. Daine, and reader—and he is now working out his sentence in prison. Can anyone wonder that we seek to hide our heads?

Mr. Daine, standing with folded arms and shortened breath, inquires what the man's name was.

"Joyce, Walter Joyce," I say, "ex-captain. Once, by courtesy, gentleman."

"Walter Joyce!" he exclaims, staring at her. "And you are his wife? Heaven help you!"

She wrings her hands, and looks up at him with wide, tearless eyes. All her coquetries are gone, all her pretty, bewildering looks and smiles.

"Forgive me," she says, humbly.

"Never!" The word seems to be wrung from the depth of a despairing heart. "Knowing all this, why could you not have let me alone?" he asks—"have checked me when you saw what you were becoming to me?"

"Because I—I grew to care for you," she says, in her recklessness, her white lips smiling faintly. "Because I never knew what happiness was until you came. I was very wicked, I know; Deborah there is thinking me more wicked still for avowing it. But this is the end of all."

In her sad eyes stands the ghost of the dead and gone past. Mr. Daine, looking down upon her with strange compassion, catches up his breath with a sob.

"Jasper, Jasper! Only forgive me!"

The silence is dreadful. I can't bear these scenes; I was not made for them. Her head falls in despair. All in a moment he folds her to him.

"If that be true, if you do love me, why, then, all may be well. Why

should he stand between us?—that base, bad man who has wrecked your life?"

I put out my hand, aghast. Ottalie, aghast too, turns her white face

to him inquiringly.

"Don't you see that it is not an ordinary case?" he asks. "What does it signify—that a few carping Puritans may carp at it? Ottalie, my dear one, come with me! I can make you happy now and always."

He waves me aside. I stand aside, and wait. It seems to me

like an eternity; but I know I can trust Ottalie.

She frees herself slowly from him. "Good-bye, dear love," she whispers.

"Good-bye?" he echoes. "What do you mean? You cannot, you will not, send me away, Ottalie ——"

"I am his-wife," she whispers, drawing a long, quivering breath.

"It is a pity you did not remember that sooner," he says, his angry mood returning. But the next moment he is drawing her to him again. "Remembered it before you played with me."

"I know it," she says, humbly. "But if I played with you it was dangerous play; for—I think I have wounded myself to death."

"Ottalie, forgive me," he cries; "I think I am going mad. Ottalie ——"

"No, no, no! don't tempt me, please," she sobs, leaving him where he stands. "Go, Mr. Daine; please go, for all is over. And I would ask you to forget me if—but no, don't forget me quite," she breaks off, with a cry of pain; "not quite, not quite. Only try not to—to blame me more than you can help."

Her tears break out at last between the dry sobs. His only answer is to snatch her to him and kiss her frantically—her face, her slender

hands, even her hair.

"Go," she gasps out; "please go, Jasper."

And go he does. And the next morning, before Sone is well astir, Ottalie and I and our boxes go off like the shame-faced things we are.

The sea-shore again. More sand and fewer houses than at Sone; we are a hundred miles from that delectable spot. Sone was not much; but this—who shall describe its dreariness? Sometimes I think I cannot bear it. It is the fag-end of the world; hardly anything but the lighthouse to see. Weeks have passed since we came; the signs of winter are at hand. What shall we do when winter comes? I am sitting on the doorstep, and Ottalie is walking up and down as if she had been wound up and warranted to go so many hours; her eyes are fastened on the sea, and her long grey skirt stirs the leaves that lie dead on the path.

"I'd just as soon be in my grave as here," I groan-for in truth all

things wear a cruel aspect to me to-day.

Ottalie stops to speak. "Deborah, don't! please, don't. We must stay here. It is a safe retreat; no one knows it. I—sometimes I fear I am not a good woman; that you know I am not. I am afraid to risk temptation again. Sometimes I wonder whether, if he"—her voice sinks, and she turns her pale, thin face towards me—"if he were to find me and ask me the same thing, I should have the strength to say no again. Oh, my mother, if you were but living now!" she adds, clasping her hands, and taking up her weary tramp again.

It is the first time she has alluded to Jasper Daine. The thought exasperates me. I must be getting ill-tempered out of sheer weariness.

"I warned you in time, Ottalie. Did I not tell you how it must end?"

"Yes, I know all that; it is no one's fault but mine," she answers, as her eyes wander out seaward again. The eyes have dark circles perpetually now, and her pretty face has lost its bloom. As a gust of wind lifts her hair I see how sharpened its outline has become.

How dreary this is! And, what is drearier still, every day brings us nearer to that of Captain Joyce's release. And then? Will he find us here? Will she die of it? Oh, Ottalie, Ottalie! If I am cross, it is for her sake.

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To and fro still she tramps. I sit on, with my despair, and watch the smoke from the coastguard cottage chimneys curl up against the grey sky, and the last leaves from the solitary row of poplar-trees fall off in the wintry wind.

And this is our life. How long will it last? I ask the question of myself as the faint, red sun gleams out for a moment beyond the lighthouse, and then sinks to its rest; sinks, only to rise again on the morrow, to rise and set on many countless to-morrows. How long? How long?

The sea-gulls flap into shore, screeching angrily, and the waves, the sad sea waves, come creeping in slowly over the sands, with a sad, sullen moan, in and in, until the faint colour left by the sun is gone, and night is upon us. And all night long I lie on my pillow and

listen to the waves, and cannot sleep.

The morning brings a letter. A letter for us! Only one individual in the wide world, so far as I know, is cognisant of our address: the friendly old lawyer, once a relative of my dead mother's, through whom we get our small income transmitted periodically. What can he have to say? It is only the middle of the quarter. Ottalie, seated opposite to me at the breakfast-table, glances at it with some faint curiosity.

"Old Weston must have gone in early," she remarks, alluding to the distant post-town.

"He had to fetch something betimes for the lighthouse."

The letter is addressed to me, and I open it. As I glance at its

contents, a mist gathers before my sight, and I turn sick and faint. Is it right to be glad at a fellow-creature's death? I know not.

"What is the matter, Deborah?"

"News. It concerns you."

"Concerns me?"

"Yes. Someone is dead."

She gazes at me with parted lips. "Not ---" she begins, and stops.

"Yes, he is dead. Your husband has died in prison."

I don't quite remember how we get through the day, except that we hardly exchange two words. What Ottalie feels I know not. I am thankful.

"Why, there's a stranger!" I exclaim in wonder, as I discern some tall man marching down the rugged pathway at evening. A gentleman, too. We had not seen anything of the kind in the place before.

Ottalie raises her eyes languidly, and looks out. She knows him in spite of the twilight, and she stands up and locks her fingers one within the other in her emotion.

He comes in: Jasper Daine. His form fills up the doorway. Opening his arms, Ottalie falls into them. And I and he do what we can, both, to still her hysterical sobbing.

"You see, Mîss Peyre," he says to me, "Fate has been kinder to us than ——"

"Than you deserve," I put in.

"Quite so. But, as my wife, I will endeavour to shield her in future from life's troubles and storms. You shall enjoy peace and rest if I can give them to you, my darling Ottalie."

And the sad sea waves did not sound to me that night so sadly as they had done. Poor weary Ottalie! The dark past was over for her; hope was dawning; she might be light-hearted once more, even in this world.

M. M. W.



OUR MIDDY.

THAT was the name Harry Grenville was known by all through the village. High and low, rich and poor, called that boy "Our Middy." He was the darling of everybody.

His mother is the widow of the squire of the parish, and I am the clergyman's wife. I have known Mrs. Grenville intimately since my marriage, which followed immediately on my husband being presented to the Vicarage of Grenford. We had been engaged for ten years, hoping for a living to marry on; and at last, when I was thirty, and had given up hoping for something by every post, came the wonderful news, only a few lines—he was vicar of Grenford, through Mr. Grenville, an old college friend.

Down on my knees I went and thanked God first. Then I looked at myself in the glass. What a worn, faded-looking thing for a bride; and I had been so fresh and fair ten years ago! After that I went downstairs and told my aunt, who had given me a home for many years.

"At last, Carry," she said, "at last! Well, dear, I hope you'll be happy. You might have been Mrs. Hunt the last eight years, you know, and all those five little Hunts might have been yours."

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"I don't envy Mrs. Hunt the very least, my dear aunt."

"A nice open carriage with red wheels, too, Carry, and a pair of greys. You'll never have more than a pony carriage. And such a perfect establishment; butler, two footmen, and a boy. Oh, dear, I suppose a dozen of each will do, Carry?"

"A dozen, dear aunt! What of, footmen or carriages?"

"Dear Carry, what a jumble you are making. Under-linen, my love, I was speaking of."

"Oh, I beg pardon, aunty; a dozen? I've never had more than six."

"A dozen or fourteen it should be. My dear father always had his things marked one, two, three, up to twelve, and he always insisted on wearing number one shirt with number one socks and number one drawers. It made him quite fidgety if he happened to get number eleven shirt and number seven socks together. Very neat, tidy man he always was. You see, my dear," continued my aunt, pursuing her own train of thought, "you knew Mr. Woodhouse before you knew Mr. Hunt, so he had no chance; your mind was made up; but if Mr. Woodhouse had been Mr. Hunt, and Mr. Hunt been Mr. Woodhouse, I wonder if things would have turned out differently. You would then have known Mr. Hunt the longest. I can't make it out at all. Such china, and such a wonderful cook! I'm so glad I've not worn that

new silk, Carry. Easter was so cold I didn't put it on, and now it will do nicely for my wedding-gown."

"Aunty, are you going to be married?" I said, kissing the dear old face. My aunt blushed, and declared I was so upset I could not speak a word of sense.

Well, I was married, and my dear aunt wore the new silk, and we went straight to Grenford on a lovely summer day. Michael's old house-keeper and her niece had been settled there a week beforehand, and the furniture of his bachelor days, with some few additions, was all we had to begin with. But how pretty it all looked when we walked across the fields from the station. The scent of a gloire de dijon rose always recalls that summer evening to me. I never see any so fine as ours. What a strange power flowers and music have—how they bring back with a sudden thrill days that are past, friends who have "gone home to rest," whilst we are still toiling over our task! And when all was quiet and peaceful, Michael took the big key of the church, and we went through the garden, under the lime trees, and into the church, and kneeling again before the altar, prayed our prayers for ourselves and for each other: that now when God had given us our desire He might not send leanness withal into our souls.

Within the year Mr. Grenville died, and it was after his death that my acquaintance with Mrs. Grenville deepened into friendship and affection. She was as nearly perfect as I imagine any human being can be; one of the few who can always be showering benefits on others without making them feel under obligations. It was such a pleasure to her to do a kindness, it almost seemed as if a hearty appreciation of it made her the one who was obliged. I never saw anything so beautiful as her manner in a cottage, and the whole parish adored her.

Harry was like his mother, and the most loving and lovable boy I ever met. He was always in mischief, yet everyone loved him. He painted my large white cat to look like a tiger, and the poor animal had to be killed; but there were floods of tears, and the only punishment I inflicted was not letting him dig the hole and superintend the burial.

He was a clever lad, though never given to study overmuch. He was very fond of music. He did not inherit this from his mother; and his guardian, an old-fashioned sort of unmusical man, objected strongly to his learning. It led young men into low society, he thought. Such a mistake! I am certain music is a talent to foster in a boy. Harry would sit quiet by the hour when I was playing, and I was the culprit who taught him. And wonderful progress he made.

It was a sort of secret from his mother which she was well aware of all the time. I never shall forget one Sunday afternoon when Harry ventured to perform on the grand pianoforte in the drawing-room. I happened to be in the garden with Mrs. Grenville when the sounds of "Campdown Racecourse," and "Slap Bang," reached us. His

mother turned, half shocked, half amused, and entering by the open window, she said in a reproachful tone, "My dear Harry, I cannot have such tunes on Sunday."

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"That is hard lines," said Harry, turning round on the music stool, when I've had the trouble of finding out the chords, and put Amen

to it, like they do to the hymns in church !"

From a child he always said he would be a sailor, and nothing else would satisfy him. He passed the examination, and returned home in triumph and in uniform; two years in the training-ship and a year at sea. He was sixteen now, grown and sunburnt, improved in every way. The first Sunday when he joined our choir, absorbed in the music, and singing like a bird, I thought I never had seen a more beautiful young face: and his high, clear voice was glorious in the dear old hymn, "Crown Him Lord of all."

How happy mother and son were for those few weeks! Harry was devoted to her; all his life she had been his friend and companion, and shared every thought.

"I hope to get the Humane Society's medal, mother, some day."

"Yes, my boy, I hope you may," said Mrs. Grenville.

"And the Victoria Cross, mother! Oh, I must get that; you would like me to get that?"

"Yes, my boy," she answered, but there was a far-away look in her eyes, as if petitioning the Great Captain to cover his curly head in the

day of battle.

And he visited all the cottages and told them all he had seen, and everyone admired him, and half the lads wished to go with him w hen he went to sea again in October, 1869. He only returned last summer as a sub-lieutenant. Such a happy meeting! Dear Mrs. Grenville said it almost made amends for his long absence. And then he fell in love with my young cousin, Helen Wood, who was staying with us. There is something so taking in the earnest simplicity of a boy's love, so different from anything else; and I never treated it as a serious thing, for I knew Helen, besides being several years older than he was, had been engaged some time, and I knew also her intended was in the navy, which quite accounted for her being always ready to listen to Harry's yarns. I did not know, however, until Captain Lee arrived, that he had been the commander of Harry's ship; and Harry's amazement that she should be engaged to such an old man (Captain Lee was five-and-thirty) amused us much at the time.

Perhaps these little details are too trivial to mention now, when the end has come; and yet why should his merry, loving life be hidden away and forgotten? I suppose no boy ever passed through "the waves of this troublesome world," as his mother used to say, with a purer heart, or a brighter, happier spirit. That line of our great poet, "God make thee good as thou art beautiful," was realised in him.

I am only giving a sketch, and it is all too recent to require description or words of mine; all I need say is, Captain Lee got command of the *Fury*, was ordered to the Gold Coast, and that Harry asked to be appointed to her.

God help England when her sons are not ready to volunteer, and God help the mothers when they are! God help the aching hearts that are weeping sore for him that goeth away, for he shall return no

more, nor see his native country!

"I may have a chance of the Victoria Cross, you know, mother,

now," he said that last evening.

"Yes, my boy," she said, quietly, her white fingers lingering lovingly in the curls, from which she had just cut a long, thick lock. "Yes, my boy," but I saw her lip quiver, and the far-away look came into her eyes again, praying for the curly head in the day of battle—praying he might yet come again from the land of the enemy.

From Captain Lee, R.N., to Mrs. Woodhouse.

"Dear Mrs. Woodhouse,—I grieve much to write particulars of the death of young Grenville, the bravest lad that ever was, beloved by all, regretted by all. He asked me to write to you to break it to his mother, but I fear Mrs. Grenville will have learnt it by telegram before

this reaches you, though I write by the first mail.

"He was not far from me, and by darting forward received the shot intended for myself. He was shot near the spine, and fell. I saw it was a mortal wound as soon as we raised him, but he was calm and quite conscious. 'Captain,' he said, 'tell Helen I saved you, she'll be so glad. And tell my dear mother'—there he stopped, and tears filled his eyes (and mine too, I may most truly say)—'dear mother,' he went on, 'we wanted the Victoria Cross, mother and I; tell her I tried for it—and I've always said my prayers—and I'm glad I did—troublesome waves of this world—tell her, please sir—she knows what I mean—and I've no pain.'

"No, there was no pain. His young face, looking really 'as it had been the face of an angel,' so calm to the last—and the last came very soon—showed there was no pain. And just before the last—you know what a splendid voice he had—just before the last he suddenly sang

two lines of a favourite hymn:-

"' 'The night is dark, and I am far from home, Lead Thou me on.'

"It was the last effort; the low, clear notes, and the touching words, 'I am far from home,' were quite overpowering to all who heard him.

"What can I say? what words can express my sorrow, my distress, that he should have given his young life for mine? How can I write to poor Mrs. Grenville? He thought for her and asked me to write to you. 'Break it gently to my mother,' he said. When I think of

her, I feel keenly that no words of mine can be any consolation—that nothing can be of any comfort to her except the thought, the sure and certain hope, that her brave boy tried to win a Cross—but has won a Crown instead.

"Believe me, sincerely yours,

" December 16, 1873."

"ARTHUR LEE.



BRIDAL ROBES.

By Mrs. G. LINNÆUS BANKS.

A BRIDAL robe should be
A dress to be worn for the day;
Then laid aside with all perfumes rare,
A treasure to guard with lifelong care,
A relic for ever and aye.

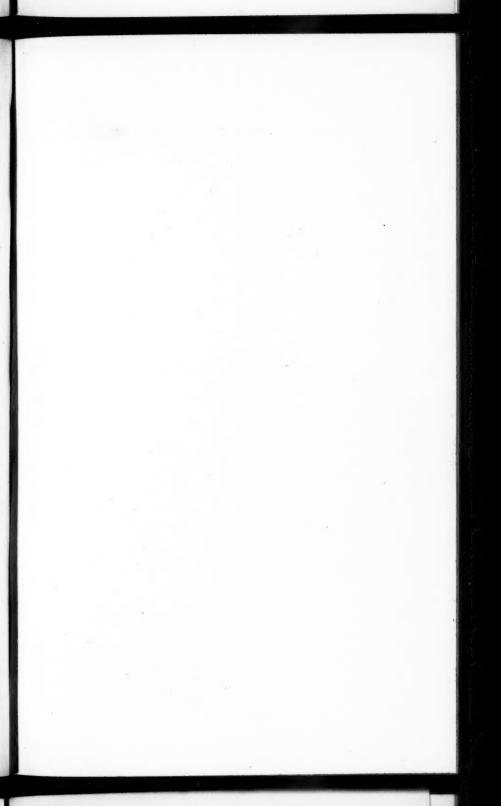
And never meaner use
Should sully its delicate snow:
The bride's last robe in her maidenhood
Should remain as perfect, pure, and good
As when it was donned I trow.

For ever a dainty type
Of her chastity pure and white;
Folded up like a rose in the bud,
Perfection hidden, but understood
By all who could think aright.

Text from the marriage morn,
In its silence to speak thro' life,
Of duties, put on with every fold,
To change that life's silver into gold,
If love link true husband and wife,

And not 'till Death should call
The tried wife to his bridal bed,
Should that well-saved robe again be worn,
Or the orange-wreath again adorn,
The auburn or snow-white head.

And only wife who kept
As spotless her life as her dress,
Be honoured to wear her bridal gown,
Be honoured to wear her bridal crown,
When Death should her pale lips press.





M. ELLEN EDWARDS.

J SWAIN